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Pauline clung to her father, beseeching him, in trembling, anxious tones, to tell her if he was much injured.

HOODWINKED; OR, DEAD AND ALIVE.

A TALE OF MAN'S PERFDY AND WOMAN'S FAITH.

BY A. P. MORRIS, JR.,

Author of "Ralph Hamon, the Chemist," "The Warning Arrow," etc.

CHAPTER I. THE LOVERS.

MANY years ago there was situated prominently on the Germantown road, a short distance beyond the city limits of Philadelphia, a magnificent residence built after the imposing style of a French chateau. It was surrounded on three sides by beautiful-ly-ornamented grounds, and broad, grassy lawns, wherein stood immense shade-trees, at various points, underseated with iron benches; and at the rear were well-graded terraces, rendered gorgeous with innumerable plants and flowers that lent an almost cloying perfume to the summer breezes. From the road to the house was a gravelled drive, dotted on either side with beds of rarest roses, and shrubs of gaudy bloom. The piazza, at the front, was wreathed in vine-clad trellis-work; while through and through the molded eaves twined, in attractive, drooping fashion, the golden-leaved ivy.

It was here that Calvert Herndon, a retired merchant of reputed wealth, had settled down to the luxury and ease well earned by years of toil. He was a widower. A dearly-loved wife had been laid to rest long before the period in which our story opens; but a daughter, just merging into perfect womanhood, remained to him, to cheer and soothe him in his declining years.

It was a summer day of exceeding splendor. In the very center of a flower-bed, culling choice buds from among a host of red, yellow and crimson roses, stood a maiden of rare and lustrous beauty.

Her slender hands were busy with fragrant buds, and as she stooped to pluck the last gul from off its stem, she uttered a pleased exclamation, and held the result of her labors out at arm's length to contemplate it.

"There isn't that a beauty? I promised Victor that, when he came this morning, I'd have the prettiest collection ready for him his eyes ever beheld. Now, then, only a little more evergreen, and a leaf or two of fern, and I'll have my bouquet completed. But what time is it, I wonder?" (Drawing from her belt a small medallion watch, and glancing at the dial.) "Why, I do say! It's nearly half-past ten. And Victor said he was coming about eleven. I

must make haste," and she proceeded to put the finishing touch to her light task.

Ere the fern-leaves were adjusted, however, a footstep sounded upon the path, and Victor Hassan, he of whom she had spoken in her self-commune, appeared before her.

"Good-morning, Pauline, my dove," he said, stretching forth both hands. In a moment she was in his arms, while a fervent kiss passed between them.

"I've come, my darling, upon the errand I promised. Is your father in?"

"Yes. I left him in the parlor not more than an hour ago. You'll find him there, I guess."

And having found him, pet, when I leave him, the destiny of my whole future will be decided."

"Mine, too, Victor," she added, nestling her head confidingly on his breast. "If he refuses to grant your request for my hand in marriage, I—I'll—I am sure I shall die."

"Oh, no—not that I hope. But don't despond. Wait until I see him. He could refuse me for no other reason than that my salary is barely sufficient to support me. Even that will not count, for I expect soon to be advanced in my position, and therefore I shall be perfectly independent while my health and strength last. Here goes, at all events; I can only fail," releasing himself and starting toward the house as he spoke.

"Oh! may Heaven grant he will not refuse you, dear Victor!" murmured Pauline.

Her lover cast back a smile of encouragement and continued on, while she, in trepidation of mind, sought the fragrant shadows of an arbor, and awaited his return with painful anxiety.

Slowly the moments passed. Fifteen—twenty minutes—and still she sat there, waiting for her lover, and the good or bad news he was to bring. The suspense grew tortuous.

At last he came, still bearing in his hand the bouquet she had given him, and his handsome features—handsome because they indicated a refined intellect and noble soul—were an expression that betokened naught of discouragement to her eager heart.

"The answer, Victor? The answer?" she cried, starting forward and throwing her arms about his neck. "Tell me quick—is it life, or is it death?"

"Life, dearest!" he replied, in happy

voice. "Look up. Don't become so excited."

"What did he say, Victor?" she continued, joyously.

"Come, Pauline, be seated, and I will tell you in a few words."

When they were seated in the perfumed bower from which she had run to meet him, he said:

"I went to your father, and without hesitancy or parley, plainly told him of our love. I told him how we had learned to live in each other's affection with a fondness that would render a blight of our hopes next to, and more painful than, death. I made him aware of how this love had sprung up—how, since the night we met in the crowded ball-room, we knew the same star of destiny illumined our paths. He listened attentively until I had concluded, and then, very naturally, it was his turn to speak, to ask questions."

"Oh, Victor! and what did he say? Was he angry, or unpleasant in any way?"

"Not at all. He exhibited the politeness of a gentleman, and the solicitude of a parent. He asked me if I was secure enough in my position to warrant my marrying, and if my salary was sufficient for all expenses."

"And you said—"

"I said yes. In addition, I mentioned that I expected shortly to be even better situated. He seemed satisfied, but at the same time reminded me that there was another suitor."

"Ah!" Pauline's gaze drooped to the grassy carpet.

"There was another suitor, my love; yet, you were at liberty to choose for yourself."

"Did he say that? Oh! are you sure?"

"Yes."

"That other suitor is our guest—Hallison Blair, I suppose?" This with a slight shudder.

"The same. Your father told me so."

"I have suspected for a long time that he loves me; or, rather, professes to that end, and her face was upturned to his as he pressed her to him, and said, interrogatively:

"But you will not be at a loss to make the choice?"

"No, Victor, no! You are the only one on this earth whom I love, besides pa. I am yours alone."

"God bless you, pet! and may I never, by word or action, give you cause to repent the holy trust you have placed in me by those words. The splendor of this day is but a reflection of the light that fills my heart since I know that you are mine till death. I never knew real happiness until this moment, for I realize a bliss intended to last forever in this life."

With what unusual swiftness the minutes fled by, unheeded, as the lovers sat there, whispering anew their mutual truth!

It was high noon when Victor first awoke from the sweet dream, in which they were wrapt, and starting up, he exclaimed:

"Why, really, I had no idea it could be so late."

Pauline consulted her watch. Quarter to twelve was the time.

"Are you going now, Victor?"

"Yes, I must be off. I'll return again this evening. By-by, darling."

One more embrace, a warm kiss, and he left her.

He had scarce taken a dozen steps, when Pauline detected the approach of some one from the opposite side of the arbor; and, turning quickly, discovered Calvert Herndon's guest—Hallison Blair.

This man was an Englishman, though strikingly dark in features, and with mustache and goatee of jet-black. His eyes were of a brownish color, brilliant and fascinating. In figure, he was handsome, rather slender, and, in all, not one to prove disagreeable in the sight of those who admire exquisite taste and display.

Pauline looked after her retreating lover, half-persuaded to call him back; then at the one who was coming toward her, and with a creeping, inexplicable feeling sunk down upon the bench from which she had arisen.

When he drew nigh, his dark eyes sparkled with a subtle brightness, his white, regular teeth were visible as he smiled in his bland manner, and said:

"Ah! Miss Herndon, you are alone, I perceive? I have been waiting quite a little while for an opportunity to speak with you privately," he continued, seating himself near her, "but Mr. Hassan seems to have enjoyed the exclusive monopoly of your society."

Pauline drew back from him.

"You seem afraid of me. Am I ugly or repulsive?"

"Oh, no," was her brief answer.

"As I said, I have waited patiently for this opportunity. I desired to speak with you alone, upon a subject that has long reigned uppermost in my thoughts. Can you not guess what it is?"

His gaze was lost upon her, for she kept her eyes upon the green flower-stems with which she toyed, and returned, simply:

"How should I?"

CHAPTER II.

A PROMPT REPLY.

"How should you?" he repeated. "You are a woman, Miss Herndon, with a woman's quick perception, and aptitude at learning by one's actions, the motive which governs them. Can you, then, say you have been, and are wholly blind to my feelings, which I must have betrayed to you ere this?"

Hitherto, he had been content, apparently, with feasting his eyes upon her beauty, and hearkening to the sweet tone of her voice, and this had afforded her a blessed respite, considering she lived in constant fear of his approaches. But now, the hand-

some Hallison Blair was touching closely upon the subject of his affection, and gradually approaching a positive declaration. Her eyes raised not to meet his. She knew the subtle power of their brilliancy; for, on more than one occasion she had been momentarily transfixed beneath his fascinating gaze, and at these times an involuntary chill crept over her. He drew nearer and pursued:

"I would have returned to my home in England, many months ago, but for the retaining charm of which I speak. There has been a magnet, as it were, which held me fast as a responsive needle." His voice was low, gentle.

She remained silent—mustering her energies for an abrupt refusal, when he should plainly ask her hand.

"Miss Herndon—Pauline, I—"

"Sir!"

"Forgive me. I must call you by that name. I am too wild to refrain from uttering it. Pauline Herndon, I love you, idolize you. Beyond the sea I have a gorgeous home, surrounded by wealth and luxury, in which you shall reign as my queen, with every thing you can wish for to make you happy. I will worship you—hasten to accomplish your slightest desire, do all in my power to render your existence a pleasant pastime. Your wants shall be my pleasure; your contentment my chiefest aim. Speak but one word; say that you can love me, will be my cherished wife, and I am satisfied to yield up ten years of my life. Will you be mine?"

He had taken her hand in his own, pressing it tightly, bending over to gaze into her lovely face; and his ardent syllables were softly whispered to her unwilling ear.

With a quick motion she released herself, and started up. She had nerved herself for this, and replied emphatically, while the blood mantled to her temples:

"Mr. Blair, I not only decline your offer of marriage, but give you to understand that I am already engaged. Even if I were not the betrothed of another, my answer would be the same. I do not like you. I hope this is definite enough," and she turned to go.

"Stop!" hurriedly spoke Blair, placing himself directly in her path, while his dark eyes fairly scintillated with anger, and his utterance seemed choked. "You wholly reject my suit?"

"I have given my answer."

"And this penniless boy, this Victor Hassan, whom I just now saw leave you, is your accepted lover?"

"As you took the pains to watch our movements," she retorted, without reserve, noting his rise of anger, "perhaps I might be right in drawing the inference that you also played eavesdropper. If so, I hope you were entertained pleasantly with our conversation."

"I repeat—he is the fortunate suitor?"

"I do not deny it. I am proud in his love."

"Are you aware that your father favors me?"

"Not more so than he does Mr. Hassan. In fact, permit me to state, my father has privileged me to choose my own husband; my choice rests with Mr. Hassan."

"He is a conceited fop."

"A man who does not possess a rational amount of conceit, lacks one of the essential attributes of true manhood, Mr. Blair. But I think, sir, you are forgetting your education as a gentleman. Such language concerning Mr. Hassan, is an insult to me."

He reddened the more, and persisted: "You had best reconsider your answer, Miss Pauline."

"The answer I have given must suffice for all time. Have the kindness to let me pass."

"Oh, certainly; I shall not detain you longer against your will. But I have this to say: I promise you, Pauline Herndon, that if power on earth can accomplish it, you shall yet be my wife!"

The calmness of this final speech contained a terrible significance to her; but he stepped aside, bowing courteously, and she swept past him to the house.

Pauline, when she entered the house, immediately sought her father. He was in the front parlor, and, going to his side, she knelt down by him, resting her head upon his knee, and sobbed audibly.

"Why, my little bird, what do you cry for?" he inquired, tenderly resting a hand upon her wavy tresses.

"Oh, pa, I am so happy!—and still so miserable!"

"Happy and miserable in the same moment?" he exclaimed, an indulgent smile about the corners of his mouth—a mouth from which had come soft lullabys and nonsense to amuse the caroling babe, who now was grown to appreciate his early kindness, and be a sole and cheering light to his life.

"Impossible, my child! People do not feel happy and miserable at once. It must be some rare cause," and he laughed lightly.

"But, pa," she said, looking up at him through her tears, "it is so with me. I am joyous as a thoughtless bird, in the knowledge that you have permitted me to choose Victor for a husband. I love him dearly."

"You have decided upon that point, then?" he interrupted, playfully.

"Yes—yes. I did not hesitate when he told me your answer to him."

"Then, that is settled. I hope you may both be very happy."

"Then, pa, you were more in favor of him than Mr. Hal—Hallison Blair?"

"Undoubtedly so, my daughter. Though Mr. Blair comes from a family who ranked high in England. His father was an Earl. I first made his acquaintance some eight years ago, while your mother and I were traveling in Europe—you were at boarding-

school at the time—and I opined you might, perhaps, prefer the title of Lady, Hallison Blair to plain Mrs. Victor Hassan.

"Title—Lady Hallison Blair! What can you mean, pa?"

"I have never mentioned the fact to you, my little Pauline, nor has he, I judge. He is an English nobleman, inheriting the lordly title from his father."

"This is really news to me."

"I presume so. But it will make no difference. I guess you and Victor will love one another as fondly as if he boasted high lineage."

"More so, pa. I could never love Mr. Blair."

"You know your own heart best. I have always held to the determination of letting you select for yourself when you became of proper age. I told Mr. Hallison Blair—as he is known here—that, if he could persuade you to love him, he had my consent to the marriage. I am thoroughly satisfied as it is. Mr. Hassan I esteem highly, and when I questioned him regarding his capability of supporting a wife, it meant nothing. All I possess shall go to make you happy."

"Oh, pa, you are so kind!"

"And now, puss, what is your miserable portion?"

Again the pretty head was nestled on his knee, and fresh tears dimmed the luster of her eyes.

"Mr. Blair has spoken to me of his love only a few minutes since."

"Yes? Then you told him of your premier engagement, and, of course, it ended there?"

"No, pa, it did not end there. He persisted, even after I told him that Victor possessed my heart and promise."

"He importuned you after that?"

"Yes. He stood before me and pressed his suit till the sound of his voice became tiresome. And his eyes, pa—they looked strange."

"Was he impertinent, Pauline?" and Calvert Herndon's brow darkened.

"Not impertinent; but, oh! he said something that fixes itself strangely upon my mind as a dread omen."

"What was his speech?"

"He said that, with power on earth could accomplish it, I should yet be his wife."

"What! He said that, and you tell me he was not impertinent? What could he mean?"

"I will seek him, and demand immediate explanation!"

"No, no," pleaded Pauline, clinging to him, as he started up to carry out his intention, "don't go. Let it pass. He could have meant nothing. Perhaps he spoke hastily, before he could check the sentence which was called to his lips upon the sudden realization that I had rejected him. Let it pass, please do, for my sake."

He sunk back into his chair, with the inquiry, "What more did he say?"

"He spoke of Victor as a fop—a man unfitted to be my husband," answered Pauline, hesitatingly, for she saw that her father was considerably agitated at this account of his guest's behavior.

"And if Victor knew this," exclaimed the old gentleman, "I'll wager that he'd cowlide Mr. Blair in default of satisfactory apology!"

"It shall be my endeavor to keep it from Victor, and I want you to do the same, pa. I don't think Mr. Blair will forget himself a second time."

"Very well; I will be content to pass it by, for your sake, my little Pauline. But, if any thing like it occurs again, I shall take immediate steps to inform him that his further presence is distasteful to me. Maybe I'll go beyond that."

At this juncture, the door-bell tingled, and presently a servant entered, bearing a card upon a silver.

Glancing at the name, Herndon read, "Gulick Brandt, M. D." and instantly ordered that the visitor be admitted.

"Excuse me for a little while, my child," he said, assisting her to rise. "I desire a private interview with the doctor."

Pauline withdrew, passing the corner in the hall, who bowed upon seeing her; and in a few seconds Doctor Gulick Brandt entered the parlor, where Herndon, remaining seated, awaited him.

"Ah! good-day, Mr. Herndon," said the physician; "I hope I find you well."

"Quite well, thank you. I have been wishing to see you for several days past. You have kept yourself rather aloof from us lately."

"That's a fact," returned Brandt. "I admit I have neglected to call with my accustomed regularity. But, you see, there's been some extraordinary cases of fever demanding my attention, and I've been unable to get around. You look well," he said, drawing a long breath.

"I accept your excuse; wait, doctor; you may think it queer that I did not ask you to be seated when you came in. I desire to speak with you privately. Let us go to the library."

Doctor Brandt followed the merchant from the room, though a lack of promptness was plainly noticeable in his steps, and he appeared to be somewhat uneasy, glancing at Herndon closely.

CHAPTER III.

THE TELL-TALE NOTE.

DOCTOR GULICK BRANDT was a rather short, stout personage, with broad shoulders, light blue eyes, florid complexion, and head very nearly bald.

His acquaintance with the Herndon family was of old standing, having filled the office of their regular physician for several years.

Calvert Herndon had first taken a liking to him on account of his brief, concise manner of transacting business, and conversation; and from an ordinary acquaintance there had sprung up an intimate personal friendship.

The merchant had, oftentimes, consulted with him, when in receipt of solicitations to invest in private speculation, after retiring from business, and invariably found in his advice solid sense and sterling whys and wherefores.

On this occasion, however, Herndon seemed moodily thoughtful, and Brandt missed the cordiality with which he was wont to be received at the home mansion.

When they reached the library, the doctor was motioned to a seat, and the merchant advanced to a desk, from a drawer of which he took a roll of parchment. This he placed upon the table, and drawing up a chair, said, while untying the tape around it:

"You have seen this before, Doctor Brandt?"

"Yes; I should think so. It's your will, I believe. I am one of the witnesses."

"More than that, I had selected you as my executor."

"Indeed? You surprise me!"

"I say I had selected you," continued Herndon, laying marked emphasis on his speech. "I have since altered my mind," and with this he quickly tore the will into a hundred pieces, casting them in a shower upon the floor.

The doctor half started forward to prevent the act of mutilation, but checked himself and asked:

"What is that for?"

"Because, sir, you are a villain."

"Sir?"

The two men were upon their feet; each looked sternly upon the other, a collision seemed imminent. Gazing thus in silence, for a second only, Herndon resumed his seat, saying, briefly, "Sit down, sir."

Brandt did as requested, but steadfastly returned the hard, sharp, searching glance of the merchant, and waited for an explanation.

"Doctor Brandt, I said you were a villain; you wish me to explain?"

"As a gentleman, and your equal, I demand that at once."

"Very well; you shall have it. Wait. It has not been until very recently that my eyes have been opened to the mock garb of piety and friendship which you have worn in my presence; and in the discovery made, so unexpectedly, I see you as you really are—a hypocritical scoundrel; double-faced rascal!"

"Mr. Herndon, I can not tolerate this; I am astonished; I—"

"Stop. You want an explanation of why I think you a villain. Now, I am going to give it you. When you visited me the other day, you apprised me of a scheme in the business market, in which money could be invested to an almost certain guarantee of netting, in the returns, over one hundred per cent profit. It was something new; had originated in a circle composed of some of the leading commission merchants of Philadelphia. As I had done on many similar occasions before, I asked your advice in the matter, and, though I failed to note it then, I distinctly remember now, you betrayed an extraordinary pleasure that I again solicited your counsel. You advised me to enter; still, you wanted a short time to consider, to look into the matter, and you would give me a definite opinion. This was on last Monday. On Tuesday last I stepped in at the United States Hotel to see an old friend of mine, who had just arrived from New York. The coach was departing at the moment for the Boston train, and, as the last passenger took his seat, he drew his handkerchief from his pocket. In doing so, something fell to the pavement. I saw it; I immediately picked it up; I called to him; he did not hear me, and in a few seconds the lumbering coach whirled beyond halting distance. He had lost a letter; I had found it. It was directed to one Hank Hawkins, of Boston. The chirography struck me as familiar, but I gave no second thought to it, placing the lost article in my pocket, and intending to forward an advertisement to some Boston paper as soon as I left the hotel."

"Seeking my friend, we seated ourselves for a cozy chat. After a while I spoke of the incident, and what had come into my possession. Very naturally, he asked me to let him look at it. I did so. He no sooner saw the name on the envelope than he uttered a surprised exclamation. 'Why,' said he, 'this is directed to one of the most notorious swindlers that ever disgraced the presence of the good city of Boston. I know his reputation well. He is a pardoned counterfeiter; lives now by playing the sharp game. Let's examine the contents.'"

"I endeavored to dissuade him from this; he declared there could be no harm, considering who it belonged to—a scoundrel of the first water—and, as he extracted and perused the letter, he read aloud while I listened. Doctor Brandt, my heart was wrung. My friend's astonishment was unbounded. I have that letter with me. You shall hear it."

He produced the epistle from an inner pocket, and read aloud as follows:

"PHILADELPHIA, June, 18—

"HANK HAWKINS, Esq.,

"Sir—I write to you shortly, through a mutual friend, I am situated in such a way as to be able to place a neat few thousand or so in your pocket. Being tolerably acquainted with your habits, I do not hesitate in making the following offer: I am intimate with one Herndon, who resides on the Germantown road, just beyond Philadelphia (this city)—a wealthy gentleman, with whom I sway considerable influence, and who would ever act upon my advice, if I would propose his investing several thousands in a rare scheme. You understand. If you will pledge me one-half and silence, I can persuade him to advance a sum of money to you, by representing you as President of the new ring. Please answer, stating at what hour, and where I can meet you on Saturday evening next."

"Is this familiar to you?" questioned Herndon, when he had concluded.

"No, sir, it is not. And I do not understand any thing satisfactory from what you have said."

"This letter is signed 'G. B.'"

"That counts nothing. It may signify Gun Barrel, Green Bottle, Game Bag, or any thing of equal unimportance."

"Yet, I see in the signature, Doctor Gulick Brandt?"

"Do you mean to charge me, Calvert Herndon, with being the author of this letter?" demanded Brandt, his cheeks reddening, paling, either from chagrin, or desperate anger, upon recognizing the fact that the merchant was unwavering in his suspicion.

"I do, sir. No doubt you have heard from Hank Hawkins ere this, he agreeing to your dirty plans, and the express object of your visiting me to-day, Monday, was to advise my entering into this scheme—which is a sham, gotten up with a view to your individual interest, and the gain of this Boston swindler. It is a plan to rob me—rob a friend; nothing less. I know our relative positions now, Doctor Gulick Brandt, and henceforth we are strangers. I have showed you that I know you to be a villain; now leave my house, and never darken door of mine again."

"I shall not go, sir, until you have given me a chance to prove that you are mistaken in this matter," said the physician. "I have held neither epistolary nor verbal communication with any such person as Hank Hawkins, as you call him."

"I think otherwise. I have proof before me," tapping the letter in a conclusive style. I want no explanation from you whatever. I have had my say, and again I order you to leave my house!"

Brandt's red face grew redder as he returned, unflinchingly, the stern gaze of the merchant.

"I will not go until you hear me," began the former.

"I will not hear you; go!"

Yet, though the owner of the house pointed to the door, Brandt moved not, but said:

"That letter is strange to me—"

"Leave this room, this house, instantly, sir, or I may forget that I am on my own premises. I once more command you, go! If you do not, I may be tempted to lay violent hands upon you. I have been hurt, grieved; now, I am angered, dangerous to be trifled with. Will you begone?"

"Strike me if you dare!" cried Brandt, "and you'll rue this day." He saw that it was useless to remonstrate, and now spoke defiantly.

The words were scarce uttered when Herndon, with an alacrity unusual in one of his years, sprung upon the physician, and struck him several blows in the face.

But he had erred in judging his adversary, for Brandt seized a favorable opportunity, and planted his fist between the other's eyes, with such force as to send him reeling across the apartment.

It would not have ended here but that the door was burst open at this critical juncture, and Pauline bounded into the room.

Doctor Gulick Brandt turned to hurry out, and encountered Hallison Blair. The Englishman smiled as he whispered: "Well done, doctor; you did me a great favor in that."

Calvert Herndon was partially stunned by the blow he had received, but walked to a sofa, sunk down upon it, and Pauline clung to him, beseeching him, in trembling, anxious tones, to tell her if he was much injured.

"No, my child," he replied to her inquiries, "merely a blow that has confused me. The scoundrel matched me well, it seems. Has he taken himself away?"

"Oh, yes, he's gone," answered a voice, and Pauline, turning her head, exclaimed, as she saw the Englishman:

"You here?"

"Why," he remarked, nonchalantly, "I was behind you when you came in here."

"How happened it that you arrived upon the scene, my daughter?" Herndon asked.

"I was passing the library, pa, coming from my room, when I heard angry words between you and Doctor Brandt. I came in as soon as I could turn the knob."

"And I was going to my room," added Hallison Blair, "when I saw Miss Pauline disappear in here, and noticed that her actions were somewhat excited. I arrived opposite the door, only in time to see my dear friend, Mr. Herndon, staggering to the wall. I am dull at comprehension, else I would have collared the physician, who was gone ere I could understand the situation of affairs."

"Well, well," continued the merchant, soon recovering himself entirely, "let the affair drop. He will never enter my house again. There, Pauline, you may go now." (Kissing her fair brow). "Think no more of it. I desire to be alone."

As Pauline, in compliance with his request, went out from the library, she raised her eyes for a moment to those of Hallison Blair. He was gazing at her with intense steadfastness, and a momentary shudder possessed her.

She descended to the lunch-hall, while Blair continued on to his room.

He smiled and chuckled lightly as he closed his door and muttered:

"Ah! Pauline, I vowed that you should be mine in spite of all the Victor Hassans who may swarm the globe! I meant it! I mean it still! I have now only to unwind the cord, and with skillful management, will find no knots. You shall yet be mine!"

(To be continued.)

The Winged Whale: OR, THE MYSTERY OF RED RUPERT.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN,
AUTHOR OF "CHARLOTTE HENDON," "HEART OF FIRE,"
"WOLF DEMON," ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIGHT IN THE MOONLIGHT.

WITH compressed brows the young sailor stared at the shining barrel.

First he thought that it was but fancy, but a second glance convinced him that his eyes had not deceived him, and that in truth it was a musket-barrel on which the moonbeams played.

No friend but a foe awaited him. In a moment he guessed that he had been led into a trap. He understood now—the late—the device of the wily Spanish captain.

"The accursed coward!" Rupert muttered between his clenched teeth. "Why did he not dare me to meet him as man meets man in fair and open fight? But no; he entraps me into an ambush: kills me by the hand of a hired ruffian from behind a bush. I have looked upon death too many times, to be frightened by it now."

Seconds lengthened into minutes, yet still the death-stroke came not.

Rupert stood motionless as a statue. His face was as calm as though, chiseled out of marble.

The bushes stirred; the cat had played long enough with its prey; the flint came down upon the steel, but no report followed; the matchlock had missed fire.

By a miracle, almost, Red Rupert had escaped the death so cunningly devised.

A dozen nimble bounds, the sailor gained the shelter of the forest and disappeared from view behind the fringe of bushes.

A muttered curse came from the man in ambush.

The prey had escaped, and the hunter was still.

All then was still.

In the covert of the bushes lay Roque Yasca, like some huge beast. He had reprimed his musket and prayed to all the saints to give him another chance at the young sailor.

Eagerly he watched the wood. No form stirred within the leafy covert.

"May Satan take the cursed musket!" he muttered in anger. "I would have drilled a hole right through him if the powder had not flashed in the pan. Let him show as much as an ear now and I'll warrant that I'll not miss him."

With searching eyes, the soldier looked upon the dark line of the forest, but he looked in vain for a human form.

"Perhaps he's plunged into the wood and will make a wide circle and thus gain the town without passing me. He is wise not to give me a second chance. I'd not miss again. No fine pieces of gold will I finger, and all because the cursed gun missed fire. Why, I wouldn't have given a copper-piece for this life."

Then Roque fancied that he could dis-

tinguish the outline of a human head peeping out from behind a tree-trunk, on the edge of the forest, some fifty paces to the right.

"If that is my bird I must change the line of my piece," he muttered, as he gazed long and earnestly at the object that he supposed was the head of the stranger.

Suddenly the head disappeared.

Roque was now convinced that his eyes had not deceived him.

A grin came over his swarthy face. Quickly he sighted his piece upon the spot where he had seen the head, and waited with breathless impatience for it to appear again.

He did not have long to wait, for ere ten minutes had passed, the head again appeared.

The soldier ran his eye along the shining barrel. Again the hammer descended; this time, the loud report of the musket followed and rung out clearly on the still air of the night.

Then to the watching ears of the ambushed assassin came the sound of a deep groan and a heavy fall.

The aim of the soldier had been true.

Up from his covert in the bushes rose the Spaniard with a hoarse laugh of triumph.

"The fine gold pieces are mine, and I'll drink deep of red wine ere the morning light comes!" he cried in triumph. "I knew that my aim was sure. By Saint Peter, I never miss my mark. Now I'll return to the city. And the soldier turned half around. But stay! I wonder if my gallant is dead? Shall I examine him and see?"

Then the Spaniard pondered on the question. "But no! I care not whether he be dead or alive. There can hardly be a question about it though. A man can't very well live with an ounce ball through his head. But I'll see."

And with this resolution, Roque proceeded toward the forest.

All was still; no moans of anguish met his ears.

"Killed outright," he muttered as he entered the shadows cast by the wood.

But Roque was not destined to reach the spot where the body of his victim should lay, for, out of the bushes, a muscular form sprung upon him.

Although taken by surprise, the Spaniard made a determined resistance, but his efforts were fruitless. With a grip of iron the assailant fastened upon him. A sudden twist and the brawny Spaniard sprawled upon the ground, hurled there with terrible force.

Half stunned and bleeding from the force of the concussion, Roque glared upward into the face of his unknown assailant, who, with his hand upon his breast and a broad-bladed knife at his throat, held the soldier completely in his power.

The stern gaze that bent over him, was that of Red Rupert, the sailor.

"Cowardly hound! why should I not bury this knife in your throat?" questioned Rupert in anger.

"Mercy, senor," Roque gasped in mortal terror, yet though he begged for mercy he saw but little hope of getting it in the frowning face of the sailor.

"Why should I show mercy to you, assassin?" questioned Rupert.

"It is all a mistake," gasped Roque.

"Yes, I thought you were somebody else."

"Who else?" asked Rupert, quickly.

"Why— and Roque hesitated; even his cunning was at fault.

"Why do you not speak? or do you hesitate to gain time to think of a lie to cheat me with?" the sailor said, contemptuously.

"By Saint Peter, I swear that I never dreamed that it was you," Roque cried. "I thought that it was Pablo, the fisherman. He cheated me at cards yesterday in the wine-shop, and I swore to be revenged upon him."

"Do I look like Pablo, the fisherman?" Rupert asked, with a sneer.

"Oh, wonderfully!" cried the soldier.

"You are lying again!"

"I swear that I speak the truth!"

"Don't sell your soul to eternal perdition by swearing falsely!" cried Rupert, sternly.

"Am I dressed like a fisherman?"

"No, senor," stammered Roque; "but, in the darkness, I mistook you for him."

"In the darkness!" Rupert exclaimed, contemptuously. "When I first saw the barrel of your musket gleaming in the foliage of the bushes, I stood in the opening, in the full light of the moonbeams, not fifty feet from you. You did not attempt to fire on the instant, but calmly waited. You had plenty of time to see who and what I was."

"I was blinded by anger," Roque muttered, in confusion. "I swear, senor, that I never noticed your face!"

"Not even when you leveled your musket directly at my heart?"

"No, senor; I swear by all the saints in heaven that I thought that you were Pablo," protested Roque. "Why should I attempt your life? You are a stranger to me. There is no reason. I am not a tiger that kills for love of killing."

"Why attempt my life? Ah! that's the riddle that I wish to solve," Rupert said, calmly. "Whether you live or die, depends upon you alone. When your musket missed fire, and I gained the shelter of the wood, I determined to learn who you were and what was the motive that bade you seek the life of a stranger. With my hat I drew your fire, then, tricked you by the assumed signs of death; lured you within my power. Now your life is in my hands. One little motion of my arm and the steel of my knife will be reddened with your blood."

"Senor, spare me!" the soldier gasped, in terror.

"Reveal to me, then, why you sought my life?"

"I had no motive but—"

"But what?" demanded Rupert, sternly.

"I—I saw you leave the ball-room, and, thinking that you might have gold, I followed you."

"This is the truth?"

"I swear it, senor!"

"You lie again, you cowardly assassin!" cried Rupert, in anger. "I am losing patience. One more chance will I give you for your life. Answer my question at once, and truly, too, or I'll drive the point of my knife into your throat."

The face of Rupert told the Spaniard that he would keep his word.

The swarthy features of the soldier turned sickly-yellow with fear. Helpless beneath the knee of the man that he had attempted to murder, Roque saw that escape was hopeless.

"Spare me!" he murmured, in terror. "I will confess all."

"Speak and quickly!"

"Captain Estevan, the son of the com-

mandante, promised me— But you will spare my life if I tell you all?"

"Yes; go on."

"He promised me five gold pieces if I would assassinate you."

"And it was to give you a chance to fulfill your part of the bargain that this noble Spaniard deceived me here?"

"Yes," Roque said, humbly.

Rupert rose to his feet.

"You are free; go, and tell your cowardly captain that in the morning he may expect a message from me. He either meets me in a fair fight or I'll brand him as a coward in the street of yonder city."

Roque did not wait for a second bidding. Nimble, he took his way back to the city.

pieces?" said Roque, looking askance at his officer.

"The price of the American's life, not the attempt that has resulted in failure," said Estevan, coldly.

"By all the saints above and all the fiends below, it is not my fault if the American is not dead!" cried Roque, in a tone that clearly betrayed how much his feelings were injured. "I did the best I could. Man is not mortal; fate was against me; how could I help it if the American escaped? I feel it deeply here," and Roque put his hand upon his heart and sighed, pathetically. "I shall die with mortification if I do not drown my emotions in wine. I haven't a copper-piece, and the keeper of the wine-shop is a beast who refuses to trust to my honor for payment. Senor captain, have mercy on me and give me one gold piece at least, if not five."

"Your eloquence would move a marble statue, Roque; here is your gold piece," and Estevan gave it to him as he spoke.

"Oh, senor, you are as generous as a prince!" cried Roque in joy. "Any further commands?"

Estevan shook his head.

With a low bow the soldier departed.

The Spanish captain remained for a few minutes motionless; his eyes bent upon the ground in deep thought. A troubled look was upon his face.

"The tide runs counter," he muttered. "I must be careful or my bark of life will strike upon the rocks and all my hopes be shipwrecked. Every thing seems to go wrong. What demon sent this man here? Who and what is he, too? Where and when did Isabel meet him? These are difficult questions to answer. Time alone will furnish me with the solutions of these mysteries."

And Nanon too—what evil fortune sent her here at this critical moment? All before me is darkness; clouds everywhere, and no ray of light breaking through them."

Then Estevan walked slowly back to the ball-room.

"To-morrow I am to receive a challenge from this rival, who, like a phantom, has appeared so suddenly in my path. I'll meet him! If my wrist hasn't forgotten its cunning, I'll send him to the shades below. That will be one obstacle the less in my way."

When Estevan re-entered upon the gay scene, no one would have guessed that his thoughts were of blood and death.

As the Spanish captain stepped into the lighted room, graced with so much love and beauty, his father, the commandante, advanced to him.

Estevan noticed that his father's face wore a troubled look.

"What is the matter, father?" the son asked. "Your face is as pale as death."

"Is it so?" the commandante said, nervously. "Yes, you look quite ill. What has happened?"

Nothing in particular and yet—Estevan, look at this! and the father held out his hand. In the palm of it glistened the silver medal that bore on its surface the strange device of a Winged Whale.

Estevan examined the medal with curiosity.

"It is a whale with wings," he said in astonishment. "What a strange idea!"

"Yes," he mused, "my eyes fell upon it, a child of terror shot through my heart. The voice of the commandante betrayed how deeply he was affected."

Estevan looked at his father in astonishment. He could not understand the meaning of his strange emotions.

"The sight of this cause you pain?" he said in wonder.

"Yes."

"Why?"

"That I can not fully explain, even to you, my son," the commandante replied, hastily.

Estevan's wonder increased.

"You have seen such a figure as this before, then?"

"Yes, long, long years ago," Don Carlos replied, deep agony in his tones.

"How came this medal in your possession?" Estevan asked, vainly striving to find some solution to the strange mystery.

"I found it but an hour or so ago, lying upon the floor," the father replied. "I saw something glitter at my feet; I stooped, picked it up, and was transfixed with horror when my eyes fell upon the semblance of the Winged Whale."

"But how could it have come here?"

"That is what I can not tell—can not even guess. I am bewildered; my brain is wandering in a labyrinth, to the outlet of which I can find no clue," exclaimed the commandante, evidently laboring under some strong excitement.

"But I can not understand why the sight of this little medal, even though it has an odd device stamped upon it, should cause you to be so agitated," Estevan said.

"My son, the sight of it recalled memories of years long past. The image of the Winged Whale brings to my mind the memory of a crime that I committed in early youth—a crime, the memory of which has banished sleep from my eyes many a long hour in the still night. This is the reason of my agitation. Finding this piece of silver seems like a warning from the other world. Perhaps, even now, after years have passed, I am to be called to an account for the deed done when the hot passions of youth ran riot in my veins."

"But, father, what have you to fear?" questioned Estevan. "You are commandante of Pensacola—supreme in power. You are above the law, for you are the law. Who, then, can call you to a reckoning for deeds done many years ago?"

"One that is above all earthly rulers—the Great Judge of heaven, who tries alike the king and the beggar," said the commandante, in solemn tones. "Think not, Estevan, that I fear mortal vengeance; no, I have no living foes that can work me harm. The ones I wronged were a lovely, helpless girl and an innocent babe. I fear that they are waiting above, before the Great Tribunal, to accuse me."

To the mind of the young soldier the speech of his father seemed like the utterance of one whose mind was wandering.

"This medal is the work of mortal hands," the son said. "If it was placed in your way as a warning of danger, the act was performed by human, not by spirit hands."

"Perhaps so; and yet it seems to me like an omen of evil sent by those who long years ago passed from earth," replied the father, sadly.

"I'll take it upon myself to try and discover from whence this strange medal came!" exclaimed Estevan.

"As you please; but I am sure that the Winged Whale is an omen of evil to us," the commandante said, gravely.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHIEF OF THE CHICKASAW.

"I, too, have made a discovery to-night, father," abruptly said Estevan, after a short pause.

"What is its nature?"

"Regarding Isabel."

The commandante looked into the dark face of his son for a moment, as if he expected to read his discovery there. The look convinced the father that the discovery was any thing but a pleasant one in its nature.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Isabel has a lover."

"A lover!" The commandante started in surprise.

"Yes; one to whom she freely yields her lips; most assuredly a favored lover," Estevan said, with bitter accent.

"There must be some mistake in this," the commandante exclaimed, hastily. "If she has a lover I should know of it. Estevan, you are wrong."

"By Heaven, I swear that I am right!" the son replied. "I marked the twain leaving the ball-room to-night, and stole after them, for I suspected that something was wrong. They conversed together some twenty minutes under a group of palmettos, a hundred paces or so from the house, and when Isabel parted with my favored rival, he kissed her, not once, but a dozen times."

"Estevan, you have been dreaming!" Don Carlos exclaimed, in haste.

"Would that I had been, but it is the truth!" Estevan said, bitterly. "Roque Vasca was sleeping off the effects of a drunken carouse under some bushes near where the two stood. He heard part of their conversation; Isabel arranged to meet this lover by stealth to-morrow in the forest."

"Who is the man?"

"Have you noticed two strangers—Americans—here to-night; one with a face almost as red as an Indian's? There he is now," Estevan pointed to the door. Even as he spoke, Rupert and Andrews entered the room.

The commandante started when his eyes looked upon the face of Rupert.

"He the lover of Isabel?" he murmured.

"Yes."

"This is more than chance; it is fatality!" the commandante exclaimed, evidently laboring under the influence of some strange emotion.

"What do you mean, father?" asked Estevan, in surprise.

"This man's face produces a strange effect upon me. I do not know him; he is young; yet I am sure that, in some way, he's connected with my early life. Perhaps he is a minister of vengeance. The Winged Whale bodes danger to me; this man may be the instrument by which I am to be stricken."

The face of the commandante showed plainly how deeply he was affected.

"It is as well, then, to destroy the instrument," said Estevan, dryly.

"No, no!" exclaimed the father, "he must not be harmed! Leave him to me."

"Well and good, if he cross not my way; if he does, let him look to himself. I do not intend to yield Isabel without a struggle. I love her, and she shall be mine, in spite of all the Americans in the world."

"Do nothing rashly," said the commandante, in warning. "I will speak to this stranger and discover, if it be possible, who and what he is; also, what object brings him to Pensacola."

"I am afraid that you will not be able to learn much. From his dress and manner, he is evidently a sailor; probably one of Lafitte's gang of buccaners that ravage the Gulf," Estevan remarked, with a scowling brow.

"A pirate?"

"Yes; and if he is one, and we discover that his intentions are hostile to us, a file of soldiers and a dozen loaded muskets will remove him from our way. If he is one of Lafitte's gang, of course his life is forfeit; but we execute the vengeance of the law upon him, not serve private malice."

"For the present, leave him to me. I'll question him at once," and the commandante, leaving Estevan, advanced toward the strangers.

"It is as well that I did not tell him that I have already attempted the life of this man and failed in my purpose," Estevan muttered. "Why should the face of this red heretic affect my father so strangely? It must be in some way connected with the events of his early life. But be that as it may, I swear that he shall not take Isabel from me."

As Estevan stood, watching the sailor he noticed that the eyes of Isabel often wandered to Rupert's face. And the glad smile that lit up her features, told that she was happy—happy in his presence.

All this Estevan noted, and it galled him to the quick. In his heart he swore bitter vengeance upon his rival.

Rupert, after letting the soldier rise from beneath his knee and depart, had returned slowly to the city.

On the road he had met Andrews hastening in search of him.

The keen-eyed Yankee had noticed the departure of Rupert and the Spanish captain from the ball-room and had seen the Spaniard return alone. Suspecting danger to his friend he had left the gay throng of dancers and hastened in search of Rupert. Chance had led him in the right direction.

"By jingo!" Andrews cried, in joy, as he met Rupert. "I was terribly afraid that something was out of kilter. All right, eh? I see that all-fired cuss, the captain, come back alone, and I kinder suspected that he'd given you a poke in the ribs on the sly, somewhere."

"I am unhurt," Rupert replied. And then he related to Andrews the attempt that had been made upon his life, the twain proceeding toward the town as they conversed.

The Yankee listened in astonishment.

"Well, you did have a narrow shave, eh?"

"A miss is as good as a mile," said Rupert, laughing.

"Yes so; but what are you going to do about it? You ain't going to let the matter slide without taking any notice of it, are you?"

"No, to-morrow you shall bear a challenge to this cowardly assassin to meet me in fair and open fight," Rupert said, his eyes sparkling.

"And if he refuses?"

"I'll horsewhip him in the open streets of Pensacola," Rupert cried, in heat. "But, he will not refuse. He bears the rank of captain in the Spanish service; that rank he dares not disgrace by refusing to meet me."

The act would cost him his social position; yes, even his commission, for his brother officers would not associate with a poltroon. He'll meet me fast enough."

"And you'll give him Jesse, eh?"

"I'll try to," replied the sailor, with a quiet smile.

By this time they had reached the barrack again.

They entered and mingled with the gay throng.

Andrews' quick eyes perceived the commandante approaching them.

"Here's the king-pin coming," he said, calling Rupert's attention to the approach of the Spanish commander.

"Leave me for a few moments, Andrews. I have an idea that he has something to say to me privately."

With a shrewd wink the Yankee moved carefully away.

The Spaniard came on straight to where the young man stood.

"Good-evening, senor," Don Carlos said, politely.

Rupert acknowledged the greeting.

"I believe that you are a stranger here, as I haven't had the pleasure of an introduction. I will introduce myself. I am Carlos Alvarado, Commandante of Pensacola," and he extended his hand frankly.

"My name is Rupert Vance; by profession a sailor," said Rupert, taking the offered hand.

"I am pleased to meet you, senor," said the commandante, bowing with easy grace, but there was a strange expression upon his face. The tone of Rupert's voice sounded very familiar to his ears.

"The pleasure is mutual," Rupert replied.

"Will your business detain you long in our city?"

"I hardly call it business," the sailor said, with a smile, and his eyes rested upon the fair face of Isabel as he spoke. "My visit to Pensacola partakes more of a pleasure trip than ought else."

"I trust that you will find time to call upon me," and the eyes of the commandante looked searchingly into the face of the young man as he spoke.

"There can hardly be a doubt of that," Rupert smilingly replied.

With a courtly bow the commandante left him.

The face of the Spaniard was clouded over with thought as his eyes bent upon the floor he walked slowly across the room.

"It can not be," he muttered; "and yet, how like the eyes are. The same fiery orbs flash before me that dazzled my senses long years ago in the mazes of the forest. But this young man is too old; no, hardly! How can I discover the truth?"

The commandante had made his way through the gay and brilliant crowd, and as he finished his muttered speech, he found himself near one of the doors that led into the rear of the barrack.

The door was open and in the space stood an Indian chief gazing with stolid face upon the brilliant scene.

The Indian was an aged warrior; marks of care and of battle were upon his massive face.

The commandante gazed with surprise upon the figure of the savage.

He knew the face of the chief, although it had been years since he had looked upon it.

"He comes like an answer to my thought," the Spaniard muttered. "From him I can learn the truth."

Then the commandante approached the Indian.

The chief saw him coming, but not a muscle of his face moved. Still he looked with vacant eyes upon the groups of revelers.

The Spaniard halted in front of the Indian.

"My brother is welcome," the commandante said.

Gravely bending his head, the Indian acknowledged the salutation.

"What does my red brother seek in the lodges of the pale-face?"

The savage extended his hand, showing the open palm.

"Nothing?" The commandante guessed the meaning of the chief. In days gone by, he had dwelt in the Indian lodges and learned their ways.

The chief bowed assent.

"Will not my brother eat and drink?"

The Indian shook his head.

"The red chief has forgotten his white brother."

The Indian turned his stolid gaze upon the commandante, but there was no look of recognition in his features.

"There was a time when O-tee-hee was the greatest warrior in the Apalachee nation. Often he has hunted the red deer in the lands of the Natchez with Steel-arm, the Spaniard, who left his brothers to dwell in the wigwams of the Apalachees."

The fixed muscles of the Indian's face moved not. The speech of the commandante affected him not a whit.

"O-tee-hee has gone to the spirit-land; he hunts the red deer in Manitou's bosom," said the Indian, gravely.

Why does the red-man force his white brother to tell him that he speaks with a forked tongue? demanded the Spaniard, in a tone of reproach. "O-tee-hee is not dead, for he stands before his white brother."

"O-tee-hee, taken prisoner by the Chickasaws, goes to spirit-land. The Snake-with-three-tails is a great chief of the Chickasaws. Scaples are many in his wigwam."

The Spaniard understood the riddle.

"The chief may now be a Chickasaw, but to his white brother he will ever be an Apalachee brave. Does the chief remember Lupa, the singing-bird? If so, let him look there," and the commandante pointed into the ball-room.

The dull eyes of the Indian glared with a strange light as he looked upon the features of Red Rupert.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 57.)

Oath-Bound:

THE MASKED BRIDE.

BY MRS. MARY REED CROWELL,
AUTHOR OF "SHADOWED HEART," "SCARLET CREST," ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN HER CELL.

It seemed as though the blackness of darkness had forever closed over the household at Edlenwilde and The Towers.

Every thing had happened so suddenly: event followed event in such rapid succession, that it seemed impossible to believe they had actually transpired.

A few weeks ago dressing for her bridal; and now a sentenced prisoner: with the scaffold instead of her wedding couch, the halberd in place of the orange-bloom wreath!

I hardly know how to describe the life of Crystal Roscoe after she knew she was doomed.

At first she had lain in fearful convulsions, while friends, lover and relatives stood by, praying that her life would go out with every passing breath; but an inscrutable Providence disregarded their passionate pleadings, and Crystal grew well and strong.

For what?

After her consciousness returned fully, it seemed as though her reason could not stand the awful pressure; she would scream in her anguish, and beg and pray them to help her—her, who never harmed a fly—till the stern old man on guard at the door would weep like a child.

At times she would clasp her hands around her beautiful white throat until the pain made her desist, and then she would moan and sob till it seemed her soul would sigh itself away.

Every effort was being made to procure a respite: hundreds of thousands of dollars were offered by the Roscoes, the Haightes, and the Temples for the real murderer to come forth; he was promised his life by the State authorities to turn himself over; and all the while, though the popular feeling was for Crystal, and men staked their all on her innocence, the hours went on and on, fraught with their burden of unutterable woe to many a heart that had beat so proudly so shortly before.

The day appointed for the termination of the tragedy was still several weeks off; and lawyers and relatives were striving for a pardon. Thousands of dollars had been expended; friends, by hundreds, had signed the touching petition to the Governor, and it had been forwarded.

Crystal and Hellice were not told of it, for the fear that it might fail.

Day after day had dragged along, while hopes ran high as to the result; the while Bertrand, full of surety that it could not end unfavorably, in that General Roscoe was a power in the State, as well as a warm personal friend of the authority who held so many lives in his hand; so Bertrand, who had never lost sight of it, but which had sunk to mere triviality compared to the solemn doings of late, had instructed his lawyer to apply for a divorce from Undine Del Rose.

There was not the slightest difficulty in procuring it; the only question being a matter of time.

And so they waited, with sick hearts, for the issue.

A fortnight, a month rolled on, and then one day there came a woman who had gained permission to see the prisoner.

Hellice was with her, as she had been for a long time, almost as pale as the doomed girl herself.

The stranger was Annette Willoughby; and the sisters shrunk from her as from a snake.

A certain grim smile parted her pale lips as she noted it.

"You naturally hate me; nor do I wonder at it; yet, for all that, I have come to see if I can not be of service to you; you, Miss Crystal."

But it was Hellice who made answer.

"You can do nothing more acceptable than to leave us."

She scarcely deigned a glance toward her, and her tones were chillingly distant.

"Miss Crystal, may I beg a private interview of a few minutes?"

Crystal opened her eyes languidly.

"As you say. You can harm me no further."

She was lying, as she had for several days, with her hands clasped around her neck.

"If my sister desires it, she shall have her will obeyed," Crystal, dearest, I will remain within call."

She walked across the cell as though she were an empress in her grand saloon, and out into the corridor.

Then Annette Willoughby drew her vacant chair up to Crystal's cot, and fixed her dull, dead eyes on the girl's bloodless face.

"I said I knew you hated me; but not so badly as I hate you."

These singular words roused Crystal; in her drifting away from all earthly happiness it seemed so cruel to wound her thus. Her lips quivered pitifully.

"I know not why you should, Annette. I never have wronged you."

"But you have, you have!"

The words came in a passionately quick utterance, and Crystal, wondering, in her vague way, if the woman were crazy.

"You thwarted my best friend; you took the man my best friend had almost won; you broke her heart, and then you murdered her—murdered her, they say!"

She whispered the last words in a horrible, low tone.

"Yes," they say; but you don't believe it, do you? How can they think I did it?"

The dead, dull eyes grew momentarily bright, as the woman replied:

"That is what I came for. I not only believe you to be innocent, but I know it! I can prove it!"

Then Crystal sprang from her cot, her blood dashing madly through her veins; her eyes springing from her head in the rapturous joy of the moment.

She fell on her knees before Annette, and kissed her cold hand again and again.

"God bless you, my angel of deliverance! Oh! what can I say, what can I do, to thank you? Take all my jewels, all my property, Edlenwilde—every thing, every thing—and then I'll be in your debt forever!"

Annette flung her pleading, twining hands away, a bitter sneer on her lips.

"Yes, I can prove it. I know every thing about it; I saw the blow struck, and can lay my hands on the person at any time. Do you hear that, Crystal Roscoe? I can lead you forth as free as the breeze that is lifting your curls! Would you go?"

"Would I go! what mockery! take me

—Annette, whithersoever you will—only take me away from here. You shall be rich, and wear diamonds, and drive in your carriage, only for God's sake free me!"

She would her arms around Annette's knees in beseeching agony.

Annette laughed outright.

"I say I can do it; but, Crystal Roscoe, unless you give your lover up, I'll not do it!"

A scream, loud, piercing, fell from the girl's lips as she reeled a moment, then fainted just as Hellice rushed in to her aid.

"You have done this?"

She pointed sternly to Annette, who was going away; she stopped a moment, as she

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 53.)

able molasses from a friend in the country

part in the fine story of *Hoodwinked*, is bound to arrest attention. Fortunate for society that such men are rare!

sad instance of the weakness and wickedness of the human nature that is not directed by an incorruptible moral principle.

Unanswered questions on hand will appear next week.

GENEROSITY THAT PAYS

THE POET'S HOME.

BY H. A. FRANCIS.

Where is the poet's home—
Can you tell?
Where does he love to roam
And to dwell?
Does he, contented, happily abide
Where business throngs on every side?
Where ever-changing "stocks" are bought and sold—
Where naught's a thought but "rise and fall of gold"?
Look there and you will never find
Joy, peace and comfort for the poet's mind.
But where's the poet's home—
Can you tell?
Where does he love to roam
And to dwell?
Is it in palaces, laid with marble halls,
Where maid and groom wait patiently his calls?
Where giddy fashion sweeps her trailing skirts,
Adored by fops and empty-headed firts?
Not there; no, not there would he delight
To pass the day, and seek repose at night.
Where then's the poet's home?—
Let me tell
Where he delights to roam
And to dwell:
He loves not temples made with mortal hands,
More than the felon loves his shackles-bands.
Go 'mong the fields, the rivulets, the hills;
Go 'mong the mountains, where the eagle builds—
Wander thro' the woodland, list the wild bird's song—
Watch the nimble squirrel, as it leaps along;
Go 'mong all these, and you've begun to roam
In what the poet deigns to call his home.
Where else is the poet's home?
Where else he loves to roam
And to dwell:
But now I can not bid you go and see,
And watch, and list—no; no, that can not be;
For none but poets' souls can ever pace
The broad expanse of atmospheric space,
Beyond which no one ever failed to find
Manna furnished for his soul and mind.
None but the poet can in fancy roam
O'er sea and land—through air—they're all his home.

Strange Stories.

THE DEVIL'S DUCAT.
A LEGEND OF MILAN.

BY AGILE PENNE.

In a small inn, that nestled under the shadow of Milan's proud ducal palace, sat a half-score or more of soldiers, drinking merrily. The song and toast went round in wild glee.

The soldiers all belonged to the duke's body-guard—the Foreign Legion, as it was called by the Milanese—a battalion of veteran soldiers, composed of men of all nations, tried and hardy warriors.

Duke Alphonse de Visconti, elected at first by the people to rule over Milan as its duke, quietly, under pretense of protecting the city from foreign enemies, enlisted all the soldiers of fortune whose steel could purchase, in his service; and when the time expired for which he had been elected, by the aid of his hireling soldiers, he proclaimed himself duke over Milan forever.

The citizens rose in revolt and struck valiantly for their rights, against the traitor who had betrayed the trust reposed in him.

The struggle was brief but severe. The Foreign Legion made short work of the city-bands, and Milan soon lay prostrate beneath the foot of the tyrant.

At the time that our story opens, the Visconti had reigned supreme over Milan for a year. The Milanese grumbled, but 'twas in whispers. One fate alone, the headsman's ax, awaited those who dared to test the power of the usurper.

Apart from the reveler at the table, sat a young and stalwart soldier.

He joined not with the rest in wild carnival, and the look upon his face was stern and high.

Two of the wild revelers at the table noticed the silent captain, seated by the huge fire-place, gazing dreamily into the blazing mass.

"Gaetano is in dream-land as usual," said the elder of the two, a burly Englishman, known as Talbot.

"Yes, he is seldom otherwise," replied his companion, a dashing French gallant, called Tete de Noir.

"What can be the cause of this settled melancholy?" Talbot asked.

"By my faith, comrade, it would take Satan himself to tell you!" exclaimed the Frenchman, coughing.

"But, was he always thus?"

"Oh, no! there was a time when a wilder gallant than this same silent soldier never drew sword, or kissed the lips of a fair woman. Gaetano and myself served in Flanders together, under the Duke of Alva. He is Milanese by birth."

"Can it be the iron rule of the Visconti pressing so heavy upon his native city that afflicts him?"

"No; were that so, the Foreign Legion would soon lose its best captain. Gaetano serves under no banner but of his own free will. He has the making of a great captain in him. I remember, in Flanders once, he held the castle of Tulle against William of Orange, the Silent Prince, who led a thousand men. The great Duke of Alva—a better soldier never lived—publicly complimented him in presence of the whole army."

"It seems a pity that such a heavy gloom should hang upon his soul," said the Englishman, musingly.

The two then turned their attention to the revelers.

Gaetano, sitting by the fire, seemed like a man in a waking dream.

He was roused from his abstraction by a hand laid upon his shoulder.

Looking up, he beheld a dark-visaged stranger, wrapped in a sable cloak and wearing a conical hat, also black, from the side of which rose a single, slender, red feather.

The face of the man was strange—high cheek-bones, a nose curved like the eagle's beak, and eyes that shone like coals of fire.

A strange shudder came over the stalwart form of the young soldier as he looked upon the face of the stranger.

"Can I have a word with you, Captain Gaetano?" said the cloaked man, in a peculiar, metallic voice, that grated harshly on the soldier's ear.

"I am at your pleasure," the young man replied.

The stranger sat down on the rude bench by the side of the soldier.

"You are called Gaetano, and your companions add the words 'The Silent.' Do you wish a cure for your melancholy?" and the stranger looked searchingly in the face of the young man.

"My cure is impossible," the soldier replied, dryly.

"Young soldier, you do not know my power. I know the secret that clouds your

brow. Listen. Over Milan rules the Duke Alphonse, the head of the haughty house of Visconti, a race in whose veins traitor's blood has crept ever since the Flood. The Viscontis are tyrants born, false, and merciless. Like prodigies like, grapes grow not from thorns; yet, from the false Visconti rose, the gentle Carmola, the fairest flower that ever breathed Italian air, has sprung."

At the mention of the name of the duke's daughter, the acknowledged belle of Milan, the soldier started, and the hot blood flushed his manly face. The evil eyes of the stranger noted all.

"Foolish boy, you betray your passion in your face at the bare mention of the name of the woman whom you have dared to love, although she is the daughter of a duke and you are but a hireling soldier. Now, mark my words; I can give Carmola to you!"

"You?"

"Yes."

"How? Who are you?"

"I am—" and the stranger pointed mysteriously downward.

"The Evil One!" murmured the soldier, in terror.

"Hush! no names!" cried the cloaked man, in warning. "Look at the ducat," and he drew the piece of money from his pocket. "It is a charmed one, and brings luck to its possessor. I'll give the ducat to thee; the ducat will give thee rank, power, and the woman you love."

"But the price?"

"In ten years your soul is mine."

"Never! I will not consent!" cried the soldier, in horror.

"Patience, and listen," cried the stranger, quietly. "There is a way to escape the penalty. You are at liberty to sell the ducat to another at any time before the expiration of the ten years, but it must be sold at a less price than its value as a simple ducat. You can not lose it, but can sell it, although you are obliged to tell the purchaser the conditions."

"But no one will buy it, knowing the conditions!"

"Yes, for he has the same privilege to sell, but it must be at a less sum than he gave, so that in the end, when it is sold for the lowest coin known, the owner visits me in my palace below."

"But if the possessor of the ducat be killed?"

"He comes to me straight," and the stranger leered into the face of the soldier.

"Think of the chance to win thy love, for

know, young sir, Carmola returns thy passion, and weeps bitter tears when she thinks of the obstacles that separate you from her."

"I consent; give me the ducat!" cried Gaetano, desperately.

His fingers closed upon the gold-piece; a shrill laugh rung in his ears, and he sat alone before the fire.

It is five years since the night when the soldiers of the Foreign Legion held their wild wassail in the little inn, and the stranger appeared to Captain Gaetano.

In those five years much has happened. The Duke of Milan still ruled the helpless citizens with an iron hand. But, though his affairs had prospered at home, abroad ill-fortune had befallen him. He had become involved in a war with Venice. The army of the Republic, led by a young soldier, sprung no one knew from where, had met the soldiers of Milan and utterly routed them—a result caused by the treachery of two battalions of the Foreign Legion, who had deserted to the enemy at the first of the fight.

The troops of Venice laid close siege to Milan. The terms they demanded were hard ones. First, a certain sum of money; next, the hand of the duke's daughter for the young General of the republic. The Visconti at last consented. The gates were opened and the army of Venice entered the city.

The bridal night had come that was to wed the soldier of fortune to the heiress of Visconti's line.

The Venetian captain wore the visor of his helmet down. "A vow," said, never to show his face to mortal till he was a wedded man."

The rites of the church were over. The beat of drums, the trumpet's call, and the loud thunder of the artillery had announced the triumph of Venice.

The bride and groom stood within the wedding chamber. She, a gentle, blue-eyed maid, clad in the white robe of innocence, with orange blossoms twined in her golden hair, but on her face a look of painful resignation. He, a stalwart warrior, clad from head to foot in golden mail; his face hid by the closed visor of his helmet. From his shoulder drooped a heavy cloak of velvet.

"Why so sad, sweet wife?" the soldier asked.

"Shall I speak truth?" the maiden questioned.

"Yes."

"I do not love you, and I love another!" she exclaimed, desperately.

"You do?" said the soldier, in a sad voice.

"Yes. I do not know whether he be living or dead. He was only a simple captain in my father's Foreign Legion, but I loved him. Five years ago he disappeared. If he still lives, I love him; if he be dead, my heart is buried in his grave."

"His name?"

"Gaetano."

The soldier cut the helmet from him. One look, and, joyously, the maid rushed into his arms!

The Venetian General was Gaetano! In a few words he told the blushing girl how love for her had urged the soldier to seize the laurel crown of the conqueror.

Then, with a sudden start, as a remembrance shot across her mind, Carmola clung closer to the breast of her lover.

"You are in danger," she murmured. "Danger from whom?"

"My father!"

"Does he dare to brave the power of Venice?" the soldier asked, with a frown.

"No, not openly," replied the girl; "you are to be summoned shortly to visit him. As you cross the courtyard the assassins will spring upon you."

"Do not fear; I will baffle the design," a servant announced the duke.

"Behold, the girl departed. The duke entered. Courteously the soldier received the host who was to play the part of the assassin."

The duke gazed long upon the face of the soldier.

"Gaetano!" he exclaimed, in wonder. "The same, my lord," the Venetian chief replied.

"How have you risen to your present rank?" the duke asked.

Then, to the wondering ears of the Visconti, the soldier told the story of the Devil's Ducat, and the compact with the Evil One.

"Is it possible?" cried the duke.

"Behold the proof!" and the soldier showed the ducat. "If you wish I will sell it to you." Then he told the conditions.

Gladly the duke purchased it, then turned to depart.

"The air is chill," said Gaetano; "take my cloak."

The duke wrapped himself in the red cloak of the Venetian and departed.

Gaetano sprang to the window, which looked down upon the courtyard.

What he had anticipated came to pass. The duke, clothed in the red mantle, was

on to mount. Then like arrows from the bow they dashed out of the village along the bridge-path that led down through the deep and tangled woods.

"How did it happen?" asked Ida, in a broken tone.

"I don't know, exactly, Miss. I was comin' back to the town when I heard a voice callin' of my name, an' stoppin', I see'd that it was the Cap'n. He was too weak to speak much, but I managed to get him astraddle of the horse, an' started to bring him home. But the joggle worried 'im powerful, an' so I had to leave him at Norton's. We brung him to, an' then he rit that note an' sent me a'fter you."

"Did you hear or see any thing of—of Ben Cohen?"

"Wal, yes—but ee's hung," evasively replied Schultz.

"Tell me—quick!"

"He's dead."

A low groan of bitter agony broke from the maiden's lips, and reeling in her saddle, she rocked forward as if about to fall. But, then rallying, she urged her horse on at a pace that sorely tested the speed of the other, to maintain its distance.

The moon had arisen and cast its dim, weird light down through the forest as the two riders sped rapidly along the narrow bridge-path. Presently a bright light came in view from a cabin on the edge of a small clearing.

"See! that's the shanty," cried Schultz. The girl did not answer, and in another moment they drew rein beside the rude porch or veranda. Schultz sprang to the ground and assisted the trembling maiden to alight. Ida sprang hastily forward and opened the door, entering the lighted room.

A startling sight met her gaze. The room was half filled with rough-looking men, thoroughly armed, bearing the unmistakable marks of a recent conflict. Before her stood a tall, lithe man, young and not ill-looking, naturally, but with a malignant smile upon his face that rendered it repulsive.

"Maurice Crafton—where is my father?" faltered Ida, shrinking back with a gesture of loathing, feeling that she had been the victim of treachery.

"Hail! Miss Ida," sneeringly laughed the man. "You little thought you were coming to visit a rejected lover, did you? Your father—bah, he is dead—I killed him! I, Maurice Crafton, the outlaw chief, the horse-thief, coneyman, murderer, if you will. I can tell it all now, for we will be far from here before daylight, and you will never

seen was when he led a party after a number of fleeing outlaws, together with young Ben Cohen.

Ida feared the worst. She dreaded lest her father had been killed. And then Ben—her Ben—perhaps he too had met the same fate! She could not bear the thought, and mounting her horse, had ridden out toward the spot of death, but without making any discoveries. Returning, she could not compose herself, but fastening the door, paced agitatedly to and fro.

Suddenly Ida gave a start and gazed eagerly out at the window. A single horseman had spurred into view, and for a moment she believed that it was her father. But then as he came nearer she could see through the gloom that it was not; but was a man known as Abner Schultz, one of the vigilantes.

He rode rapidly up to the door of Wingate's cabin, where he was met by Ida, who eagerly cried:

"What news—what of my father?"

"Bad, Miss Ida; but then not so bad but what it might be worse, I reckon."

"Speak out—tell the worst—I can bear it!" gasped the maiden, pressing one hand tightly on her heart, as if to still its painful throbbing.

"Wal, then, he's hurted—purty bad, too, I consair. Sorter run agin' one o' them pesky horse-thieves, an' got a pistil wound through the side—a bad cut on the head, an' a—"

"Is he alive?" gasped the daughter, supporting her trembling frame against the door-casing.

"Wal, yes; leastways he was when I left him. He told me to come for you, an' bid you not wait a minnit, if you wanted to see him afore he went under. Hyar's a note he sent, for far you'd not b'lieve me," added Schultz, producing a scrap of paper, scrawled with rude crimson characters.

Ida grasped it and quickly scanned its contents, which seemed as if drawn by a trembling hand, with a pointed stick in letters of blood.

"Daughter, come to me. I am badly wounded. I must see you before I die. Trust Schultz. He will guide you to me."

"Where is he?" faltered Ida.

"Bout three miles from hyar, at Norton's cabin. Will you go?"

"Yes. Bring my horse from the stable. It is ready saddled. Hasten!"

The borderer speedily brought up the prancing black steed, and assisted the maid-

have a chance to betray my secret, for you go with us. As my bride—ha! ha! A glorious wedding it will be!"

Ida turned to flee through the still open door, but the burly form of Schultz barred the way. She was netted! It seemed as though nothing could save her from the power of the demon who stood before her so exultant at the success of his ruse.

It was the old, old story. A fair maiden beloved by two men, widely differing in moral character; in every thing save wearing human shape. Ben Cohen was a brave young man, true-hearted and honest-souled. He loved Ida, and had won her confession that the sentiment was reciprocated.

Maurice Crafton was a stranger to all when he first came to the little border settlement. He "squat" on a section of ground and began improving it. He had plenty of money, seeming to be an honest and respectable man. He also learned to love Ida Wingate.

He avowed his love, and was rejected. Then, one day, he made a brutal assault upon Cohen, receiving as a reward a most unmerciful thrashing. After this he left the neighborhood, and was seen no more for nearly a year.

In truth he had all along been the leader of a gang of outlaws who had proved such a scourge to the surrounding country. Abner Schultz was one of his spies, who had joined the vigilantes, the better to serve the cause of his chief and comrades.

Being defeated by the regulators, and recognized during the struggle, Crafton had effected his escape, and resolving to flee to a safer field of operations, determined to take Ida with him. Schultz had easily discovered that Wingate had not yet returned home, and had concocted the black plot that had thus far proved so successful.

"It is useless; you need not hope to escape me, my pet," added Crafton, as he noted this action, and advancing, he grasped her arm.

"Unhand me, coward!" cried Ida, fully aroused by her danger. "Men, will you see him insult a woman in this manner?"

The brutal wretches only chuckled.

"No use, I tell you, so you may as well submit quietly. If you do not, I will have to use force, and that would be far from pleasant to both of us. Come, now—won't you salute your devoted husband that is to be?"

"No? Then I will take it myself."

The villain clasped her in his arms and strove to pollute her lips with a kiss. But writhing from his grasp with a long shriek, Ida raised her whip and struck him a bitter blow across the face. The tough, lithe rawhide cut cruelly, and the blood began to ooze slowly from the discolored welt as the outlaw staggered back with a hoarse curse of rage and pain.

What he might have been led to do by his wild anger can not be told, for at that moment there came a quick rush of iron-shod hoofs, and a moment later, ere the surprised outlaws could collect their wits, the door was dashed open and a tall, gray-haired man sprang inside with drawn revolver. It flashed, and with an agonizing cry of death-pain, Maurice Crafton fell to the floor, shot through the brain.

Other forms now entered, and there ensued a brief but bloody and horrible *meele*. Then all was still save the moans and sickening gasps of the dying.

The last remnant of the outlaw band had been annihilated, and the vigilantes were triumphant.

Their tale was soon told. Wingate and Cohen had both led the pursuit after a portion of the gang, to a retreat among the hills, and had only conquered them after a long and desperate struggle. Then returning, they had heard the cry of Ida, and recognizing her horse, had made the assault with the result as detailed.

We need only add that Ida, in due course of time—which was marvelously shortened by the ardent pleadings of the lover—became Mrs. Ben Cohen, and still lives in the flourishing town that marks the spot where stood the little village, "twenty years ago."

Lu's Masquerade.

BY MARY REED CROWELL.

It was a charmingly pretty costume Lu Merrill had selected, one that seemed invented purposely to set off her *petite* beauty; and cousin Frank, lounging carelessly on the sofa in the dining-room, as she came dancing in, smiled approvingly.

Frank Avery was a tall, graceless sort of fellow, with plenty of money that he was wickedly lavish of, with a certain gay, winning way about him that all the girls liked. He was a most perfect dancer; so was Lu, and that is why they usually went together to the balls and socials that were of frequent occurrence in Nostretrap during the winter.

"I like that, Lu. The little hat especially is so jaunty; only it is a shame for your pretty face to be covered with a hideous mask."

He looked very earnestly at her—he often had, of late, when he paid her some little compliment, but Lu whirled laughingly away.

"Isn't my face beautiful, now? Frank, you might know I shall wear a mask to save the senses of all the susceptible little boys like yourself. But, just give your serious attention one moment, while I tell you that George Graham has sent word she wanted to go to this ball at the Arepo House, and owing to some misunderstanding, Fred Arlington and she are at outs. She wants to go with us."

Frank frowned.

"I hate three, awfully!"

"Because you are selfish. But, George can go in our carriage just as well as not, even if you have to walk."

"Thank you!"

Was there a tone of ill-concealed anger in the words? Lu was sure of it, and in a pretty, penitent little way, laid her hands on Frank's handsome head.

"Don't be angry, coz; indeed I thought you liked George Graham first rate, and would enjoy her society. If you say so, Frank, I'll send word to her."

How pretty she was, with her scarlet cheeks and floating golden-brown hair, that waved in flossy softness over Frank's face, and sent strange shivers over Frank's face.

Frank Avery took her hands in his own and drew her tightly down to his breast and kissed her—he never before had done so.

"Lu," he whispered, through the floating flow of hair, "I was hoping to have you all to myself, not because I am selfish, but because I love you so. Didn't you think I loved you?"

He held her proud little head down against



THE VIGILANTE'S DAUGHTER.

The Vigilante's Daughter.

A BORDER REMINISCENCE.

BY JOSEPH E. BADGER, JR.

IDA WINGATE paced rapidly to and fro in the largest room of the little one-story frame building, her face working with strong emotions, and her hands convulsively clutching the folds of her riding-habit. She was evidently ill at ease, and would frequently pause before the window and gaze eagerly out through the fast-gathering twilight, toward the woods that closely environed the frontier village.

Kansas at that time—not so many years since—was truly a paradise for horse-thieves, counterfeiters, and, in short, of the refuse and offscourings of the older-settled States. The law was a dead letter, except that species meted out by one Judge Lynch, and his assistants—a hickory rod, or mayhap a hempen cord dangling from some sturdy branch.

Harvey Wingate—father of Ida—was chosen leader of a band of these regulators, or vigilantes, as they termed themselves, hoping to rid their section of the scourge. Early in the morning of the day preceding that upon which this sketch opens, the vigilantes had started out on a scout, or rather a chase of the marauding band, who had robbed and brutally murdered a peaceful settler some few miles distant from B—

Since then nothing had been seen of Wingate, although a number of rangers had returned, saying that they had had a fight with the outlaws, defeating them with considerable loss. But where Wingate was, they could not tell. The last he had been

him, and looked in her eyes that were serious enough now.

"There was a little quiver on her lips, too, as she struggled to free herself."

"Oh, Frank Avery! I have never dreamed of such a thing! I knew you liked me—and I thought you knew I—"

"It is not that you love some one else?" His hoarse voice almost frightened her. Was this merry, saucy Frank Avery, who never seemed in earnest about any thing?

This sternly tender man, whose will was written on every lineament of his features? "Oh, Frank!"

Troubled tears rushed to her eyes, and she put her hands entreatingly toward him.

With a stern shake of his head, he motioned the tiny white flakes away.

"No, you've a perfect right to bestow your love on whomsoever you will. I was mistaken."

He walked suddenly out from her presence, and poor little Lu, disregarding the elegant golden and scarlet costume, laid her head on her arm and cried.

The spacious auditorium of the Arepo House was thronged with a motley crowd; the galleries filled with delighted spectators, and the private boxes afforded a good view of the magnificent panorama on the dancing-floor.

Every nationality was represented; all sorts of grotesque monstrosities were in full regalia; lords and countesses, princes and Indian queens, fairies and monkeys, bears and peasant girls, promenade the arena.

Gliding in and out among the dancers, Lu Merrill's vivid scarlet and golden costume was more than ordinarily conspicuous, while, frequently by her side, was Georgie Graham's velvet and green.

From under his mask, Frank Avery gloomily watched the graceful little woman he loved so well; and yet he avoided her. Since that morning when Lu had almost told him she loved another, he, in his stern impetuosity, had rushed from her presence, and till now, had not seen her.

He was not enjoying himself very much, because he was hurt, vexed, and not a little mortified. It was the first offer he ever had made; Lu was the first girl he ever had loved, and he had failed with her.

Away down in his heart he was very sore; it had been such a delicious dream to think of the time when Lu, dear, dainty, little Lu would be his very own; and now, some other fellow—how he hated him, whoever, wherever, whatever he was—would win and wear her!

Then, smarting under the whip of jealousy, mortified anger, and wounded pride, Frank came to the conclusion that Lu was not the only pretty girl in the world; very likely another could appreciate what she did not; for instance, Georgie Graham there, in the bewitching dress of silver tissue and brilliant emerald fringe, that still displayed the most dainty of ankles.

Lu had said Georgie had quarreled with Fred Arlington. Frank had heard of hearts being caught in the rebound; and, after all, he really liked the looks of the lady in green and silver better than the one in scarlet and gold.

So his spirits returned in full tide—an unnatural flow of merriment they were—and he went up to Georgie Graham, the charming Neapolitan lady, in the silver and green; and, in carnival style, graceful though speechless, asked her hand for the Lancers then forming.

After the Lancers he took her to her seat; then, in some darker corner, where the gallery cast a convenient shadow, they sat down.

"Miss Georgie, you know me?" She started a trifle, possibly surprised at his recognition; but she heard a little laugh.

"Oh, yes! Mr. Avery!" "I did not think you knew. I imagined only very dear friends could read these masks; that is why I was certain you were Miss Graham."

His voice sounded slightly unnatural to himself, but he remembered how oddly voices will sound under a mask.

Her hand lay lightly on her knee, and Frank took it in his own.

"Georgie, I am going to let this ball decide my destiny. Will you brighten it by being my wife?"

"Do you love me, Mr. Avery?" She spoke lowly; he just caught the words. "I thought you cared for Lu."

"I confess I did, Georgie; but she doesn't love me, I am sure. Can you? will you?" "Frank, I will—do I always did."

"Despite Mr. Arlington?" "Despite Mr. Arlington?"

So they were betrothed, and she wore on her finger a tiny little ring Frank carried on his watch-chain; one he had bought for Lu. That night Frank was wild in the excess of his spirits; once he danced with Lu, but neither spoke a word; and when the hour for unmasking came, Lu and Georgie had gone.

Later, when the crash of the music was silent, the glare of glittering costumes gone from his feverish sight, and Frank lay sleepless on his bed, watching the dim light burning so steadily in the window of Lu's room in the other angle of the house, he viewed the matter in its true light.

He had been wickedly hasty; he had committed himself to a girl he cared not a straw for; he had gained from her the confession that she loved him, when he never could return that love.

What was to be done? Poor Frank! He was verifying the adage of sinning in haste and repenting at leisure. But, with all his impulsiveness, all his rashness, Frank Avery was a young man of good general principles, and not a bit of a coward; so he concluded, by the time it grew light, to see both ladies and arrange affairs better.

He would go to Lu first, and tell her all, and ask her once again.

Just after breakfast, he walked into the parlor, where Lu was making her masquerade suit up into a package to send back to the costumer.

It lay about her on the floor and table, and Frank fairly screamed out when he saw it. He gave a rapid glance at her hands, then caught her in his arms.

"Lu! Lu! my precious darling, can it be? I came to take back what I foolishly said last night to the lady in silver and green; but, it was you, oh, Lu, how thankful I am!"

Lu leaned her head on his arm.

"Georgie and I changed suits on account of that quarrel of hers with Fred, and I never thought the difference it would make to me. Besides, dear Frank, you are such an awkward fellow! The other morning I was only confused at your sudden declaration; I don't think I told you I cared for

any one else. I said, 'I thought you knew'—and then you stopped me. I was going to say I thought you knew how I always had loved you so."

She smiled in his face—it was solemnly tender now as he gazed down at her.

"And I came so near losing you! I owe it all to you, my darling."

"Or my masquerade," she said, gayly.

The White Witch:
OR,
THE LEAGUE OF THREE.
A STRANGE STORY OF AMERICAN LIFE.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.
AUTHOR OF "HEART OF FIRE," "WOLF DEMON," "SCARLET HAND," "ACE OF SPADES," ETC.

CHAPTER XXXI.
THE CLUE.

HARDLY had Pipgan's hand touched the veil that concealed the features of the mysterious woman, ere he felt a strong arm around his throat and he was dragged backward to the ground.

The woman darted into the carriage; the driver on the box whipped up his horse, and the carriage rolled off at a furious rate of speed. Pipgan did not succeed in seeing the face of the mysterious woman whom he had tracked so long and patiently.

The Englishman, attacked from the rear and taken by surprise, was carried to the pavement almost without resistance.

A moment only did the unknown, who had made the attack so suddenly, enjoy his triumph, for with one of the sudden wrestler twists with which but an hour or so before he had set at naught Montgomery's superior strength, Pipgan freed himself from the grip of his assailant, and catching the stranger by the legs, tossed him over in a heap upon the ground.

Then Pipgan sprung to his feet, but, as the struggle had taken up some little time, the carriage had disappeared in the distance.

With a cry of rage, the Englishman realized that his prey had escaped him.

A little knot of the drivers surrounded Pipgan and his antagonist, who was slowly picking himself up, considerably astonished at his sudden downfall.

Quite a number of carriages stood by the curbstone.

"Look-a-here! what did you throw me over for, say!" demanded the fellow that Pipgan had upset so easily, in rising wrath.

"What did you pull me over for?" cried Pipgan, his blood up, and nettled at the escape of the woman.

"Cos I wanted to," said the fellow, roughly. "Now, you jest 'politize or I'll hurt you, some'!" and the man approached the Englishman, menacingly.

"Did that woman pay you to hold me, you cursed fool you?" cried Pipgan, in anger.

"Wot's that to you! Who do you call a fool, say, you mush-head?" retorted the man.

"Let's have a ring! fight it out!" cried one of the bystanders, in delight at the prospect of a row.

"Give me fair play and I can whip a dozen on like this fool, who poked his nose into other people's business!" exclaimed Pipgan, who now had a great desire to thrash the meddler.

"Why, I kin eat you up!" said the man, sarcastically, and indeed he looked big enough to.

"Try it!" cried Pipgan quickly, and as he spoke he put up his hands in a manner, one of the bystanders afterward said was, "very scientific."

The big assailant and the little Englishman faced each other; the stranger swinging his long arms around like a windmill, the Englishman advancing and retreating on his toes like a dancing-master.

The man made a rush at his nimble antagonist, striking right and left with tremendous force, but the strength of his blows were wasted on the air. Pipgan, quick as an eel, dodged the sledge-hammer blows, slipped under the arm of the other, and before he could turn, put in first the "right" and then the "left" on the brawny throat of the giant, and the result of which was, the man went into the gutter, all of a heap.

The Englishman had won, for the man quietly said that he was "satisfied."

"Lay low; here's a policeman!" cried one of the lookers-on, cautiously.

The hint was enough, and the "meeting" dissolved.

The Englishman, walking up Broadway, cursed his ill-luck.

"Now, if this ain't awful!" he ejaculated in disgust. "I thought I had a dead sure thing, and this precious cove, that I've just polished off, had to come in and spoil it. It's been an awful run of luck to-day."

Mentally, Pipgan asked himself how he could recover the lost scent. Vainly he thought. He could not hit upon any device.

"If I ever see her again, I'll know her, I'm sure of that," he muttered. "I'll never forget those hands or the little ring. I'm going to find her; I'm sure of it, but I can't tell how, though."

Pipgan proceeded up Broadway at a rapid pace. His steps were keeping time with the busy thoughts passing so quickly across his brain.

"How odd this whole affair is!" he exclaimed, communing with himself as he hurried onward. "I hadn't any idea that this Countess of Epernay, as she calls herself, knew Mr. Montgomery. There's an awful deep game in it, somewhere. I must keep my eyes upon her. But, how the devil is it that this veiled woman, who calls herself the White Witch, knows anything about it, and why does she warn Mr. Montgomery? Oh! what a lot of riddles there are here!" and Pipgan looked around him in despair as if he expected to find a solution of the mystery in the silent houses, or the motionless stones of the street.

"How she knows, I can't guess; that's a thing or two beyond my wits, and they ain't generally considered dull ones, either. Now, why does she tell Montgomery? Oh! and a possible solution of the mystery occurred to the Englishman.

"She loves him! that's as plain as the nose on my face! She loves him, and she wants to save him from his enemies. I've got the tail of the rat now!" and Pipgan rubbed his hands together, gleefully. "I think I can see my way out of the hobble. All I've got to do is to find the girl that loves Mr. Montgomery, and at the same time that I discover her, I discover the White Witch. She has escaped me to-night, but she shan't escape me to-morrow."

And then another thought came into Pip-

gan's mind. A thought that made him knit his brows in wonder.

"The White Witch warns Montgomery not to love this Leone, and yet, in the same breath, tells him that this girl loves him. Now that's mysterious. She asked him, too, if he knew the relations that exist between Lionel O'Connell—pretty name, pity 'tain't his own!—and Pipgan laughed, quietly—

"and this girl, Leone. I rather think I could give the young man all the information on that point that he wants; but, I'm afraid it would worry him some. Talk about tangled up affairs; if this one don't beat any thing that I ever heard of."

Then Pipgan walked on for a few paces in silence.

"I wonder if I could see Mr. Montgomery to-night?" he said, suddenly, and then, as if the wish had been a potent spell, he saw Montgomery coming down the street.

"Did you succeed?" asked Montgomery, eagerly, as they met.

"No," replied Pipgan.

"It was my fault then; I detained you; but for that unlucky mistake you might have succeeded. I don't know where my wits were. I never thought, even for a single instant, that it was you who had played the spy upon the interview between this mysterious woman and myself; yet, just before the woman came, I was wondering where you were," said Montgomery, in despair.

"Oh, no!" cried the Englishman, quickly. "It wasn't your fault. I found out from the policeman at the gate which way she had gone. She got on a Broadway car; I followed her; then she took a Sixth avenue car to the Astor House; there she took an omnibus up Broadway; got out at Union Park, and there gave me the slip by getting into a carriage and driving off."

"Could you not follow her?"

"No," she had a little game fixed to stop me. I suppose she discovered that it wasn't much use to change from the cars to the bus, because I could do that, too—you see, sir, I was unlucky enough to let myself be caught watching her. So she arranged a nice little plan to throw me off the track. Just as she was getting into the carriage, I rushed forward and snatched the veil from her face; it was the only thing I could do, you know, because I knew the dodge game was up, for I hadn't money enough to charter another vehicle to keep up the chase; and I was too tired to think of running after her."

"You took the veil from her face?" asked Montgomery, eagerly.

"Yes."

"Then you saw her features?"

"No; she darted into the carriage, and a beast of a driver, that probably had had a tip from her to stop me, caught me by the throat and tumbled me over like a sack of wheat. By the time I got on my feet, the carriage had got out of sight."

"She probably paid the fellow to stop you," said Montgomery, thoughtfully.

"Exactly, and I paid him with a couple of hot un's under the ear," said the Englishman, in a tone of extreme satisfaction.

"What! you fought with him?"

"Bless you, it wasn't a fight!" exclaimed Pipgan, contemptuously; "he was a big fellow, but no match for me. Why, I've put on the gloves with Jim Mace himself across the water, you know."

"Then you have not been able to gain any information as to who or what this mysterious person is?" Montgomery said.

"Oh, yes, I have," replied the Englishman, quickly. "I lay two to one that I find out who she is before a week is over."

"You have a clue?"

"Yes; I saw her hand, and a ring on her finger."

"And can such a trifling discovery as that aid you?" Montgomery asked, in wonder.

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for this emergency to be taken by surprise. He had halted before he came in view of them, and only peered through a narrow chink between two huge stones to assure himself of their presence.

He no sooner made the discovery than he quietly seated himself in imitation of the sentries, placed his gun at his feet, and waited. The night was chilly and cold, and was verging toward the gray dawn of morning, when the atmosphere is most piercing to the human frame.

Did Kenewa expect them to go to sleep? The chances were a hundred to one against sentries falling asleep upon their post.

To shoot one, to try a hand-to-hand conflict with the second, would have been easy enough, but in an instant he would have to cope with the whole body of redskins. This plan, therefore, was not to be thought of for a moment.

The position of affairs was this. Facing where Kenewa sat, or somewhat to the left of the sentries, was the pool of water already alluded to, and which was divided from the stream of the waterfall by a row of dark pines and clumps of bushes. Some of these grew so near the edge, as to appear to rise out of the water itself. This was most particularly the case where a small spot of land ran into the pool for about a dozen yards.

Most prominent on this slip of land was one large pine tree, which had weathered many a storm, before the others had lifted their heads to the breeze. Upon this Kenewa kept his eyes fixed with an evidently keen and earnest glance.

Presently, as if by magic, the pale and livid hue of nature changed, and the red sun, leaping as it were from his couch in the east, tipped the tall boughs of the old pine with a rosy glow.

At the same moment there stood at the foot of the tree one of the most charming of Indian girls.

Raven hair hanging over her shoulders, with porcupine-quills and other gewgaws stuck in all parts, just met a tunic of deer-skin, dressed with extreme care, that reached half-way to the knee. Then came leggings, light and elegant in shape, and in-closing limbs, which, even thus clothed, were easily distinguishable for their roundness and beauty.

Her face, olive in complexion, with expressive dark eyes, and a mouth far more shapely than is general with Huron women, was small and delicate, with all the blushing timidity of virgin youth, just warmed into life by love.

In her hand was an Indian bow, by her side a small quiver of arrows.

At first she merely took up her post under the tree, with her eyes fixed on the ground, as if awaiting the presence of some one long expected. Then, slowly, and as it were cautiously, she raised her eyes and looked around. Her glance instantly fell upon the Shawnees, who, with their backs slightly turned from her, were conversing in their usual monotonous and guttural tones.

It was Prairie Rose, the promised bride of the Huron chief.

The girl looked a moment like a frightened fawn, but, quickly recovering herself, was about to glide within the shelter of the thicket, when she became as it were spell-bound.

She saw Kenewa standing erect, almost within view of the Shawnee sentries, motioning her to make good her retreat without hesitation.

With a covert smile, but with all that air of quiet submission peculiar to her race, the girl moved away, but only behind the shelter of a bush out of sight of Kenewa. Then she gave a low, silvery, but almost inaudible laugh, as she reflected that, as she was not yet the young bride's wife, but only his beloved one, she might take the liberty to act for herself.

Quietly she strung her bow, and selecting a sharp, pointed arrow, took steady aim at the sentry nearest to her.

The shaft could be heard whizzing through the air, and then it struck the man, penetrating through the fleshy part of his arm, and entering his side, but very slightly.

With a cry of rage and pain the Shawnee rose to his feet, broke the arrow in twain, cast the pieces on the ground, and darted with his companion in the direction whence they knew the shot must have come.

The thicket was the only cover whence an enemy could have launched the winged shaft.

His eyes for a moment sparkling with animation, Kenewa put himself to a trot, and followed in the track of the Shawnees, who dashed into the thicket with less of caution than is usually exhibited by Indians on the war-trail.

Kenewa did not take exactly the same direction as the enemy. Knowing the locality well, and the depth of the pool, he waded in up to his middle, and made for the large pine, at the foot of which, cowering like a beautiful panther about to spring upon its prey, was the Indian girl, another arrow ready.

Not a word was spoken, but at a sign from Kenewa, the girl rose and followed the warrior, who struck across the thicket in the direction of the waterfall.

A hasty crashing of bushes and a smothered cry or two warned Kenewa that the Shawnees were on their trail.

The young warrior had not been called Lightfoot for nothing. Never in the chase, or when running in matches, had the handsome young Indian been defeated.

Kenewa, without pretending to notice Prairie Rose, darted off across the plain away from the cataract, the secret of which he had no intention of betraying. An oblique glance, however, assured him that the girl was equal to the emergency.

They were now about two hundred yards from the Shawnees' camp, which still was silent, the fires themselves having almost burnt out for want of fuel. The fire-water of the whites had done its work, and but for the sentries the whole band might have been massacred and destroyed with ease.

A tremendous yell from the two Shawnee braves now awoke the echoes of the forest and hills, and the next instant the whole howling troop of redskins was on the track of the fugitives, the white men not thinking it necessary to join in the somewhat unequal hunt. Besides, they still suffered from their wounds, and were yet under the influence of drink.

When, too, the Shawnees themselves perceived that only one man and a girl were to be coped with, they gradually fell off, until six swift runners remained upon the track of the Huron and his betrothed bride.

As soon as they were on the plain, Kenewa, whose only chance of escape was to reach the hills and hide until he found an opportunity to regain the cavern shelter,

took an oblique direction toward the hills.

At the foot of the hill was a belt of forest, while up the sides were here and there stunted pines and oaks, which at a pinch might serve him as a shelter from behind which to defend himself against his relentless foes, who, however, were not yet quite assured of his real character, or else more outcry would have been made in the pursuit.

Prairie Rose watched every movement of her beloved brave, and when she saw that his design was to seek the hills, she set off with a merry laugh, at a pace with which Lightfoot felt it difficult to keep up. He, however, followed with a grim smile, nor did either halt until they were behind the shelter of the first trees.

Then Kenewa turned, and took steady aim at the foremost of the Shawnee warriors. The Indian girl at once imitated his example.

A flash of flame, a report, and one red-skin fell dead upon the plain, a second went limping off with an arrow in his thigh.

Kenewa quietly took the bow, and handed the gun to the girl, who began loading. Again an arrow sped, and this time fatally.

Again exchanging weapons, Kenewa darted into the timber belt once more, followed by his fair companion, whose presence is easily explained.

During one of the constant and hereditary forays of the Shawnees into the Huron territory, a band of braves had, after slaughtering some defenseless old men and women, carried off into captivity such maidens and boys as promised soon to be of use to the tribe. Among these were a younger brother and sister of Matata.

Kenewa, having resolved to liberate them, had yielded to the blandishments of his beloved, so far as to associate her in the enterprise, under the impression that if force did not prevail, cunning and feminine tact might.

Hence the meeting at the Pilot Rock.

But Kenewa was a man of precaution and resources. It might be dangerous for the girl to come straight to the rendezvous, and it was arranged that she should leave the protection of the distant forest with extreme caution, and be at daylight beneath the huge pine tree, if the beacon-fire on the rock warned her of the presence of dangerous foes.

The belt of timber is crossed, the steep hill is before them, and Kenewa, casting his rifle on his back, takes the Prairie Rose by the hand and leads her up the hill, a piece of condescension and kindness which brings a beaming smile on the countenance of the maiden. Not a word is spoken, for both knew too well the nature of the emergency to waste time in talk.

The enemy must be thrown off the scent or their capture is certain; when for Kenewa there is death, for Matata the wigwam of a Shawnee brave.

The warrior, however, has a distinct plan, which he did not think necessary to impart to the Indian girl, even if there had been time.

The mountain stream, beneath the waterfall of which Kenewa had led his friends, took its rise far away in the hills, and above a series of falls of various degrees of strength, it flowed wide and steady enough. For this point Kenewa was now making as rapidly as possible, there to defend himself.

As yet there was no sign of pursuit, but the Huron chief knew full well that a watch was kept upon his movements, until other warriors came up to replace the killed and wounded. He, therefore, without harassing himself or his companion, kept on in the direction he had selected, and was in about a quarter of an hour quite sheltered from view in a narrow gully, which, in a few minutes, brought him to the bank of the stream.

It was here a deep, wide, and somewhat sluggish stream, running between banks fringed by cottonwood and a variety of bushes.

About fifty feet from the shore was a dense clump of trees, growing on a kind of island.

"We must swim yonder," said Kenewa, wrapping a piece of oil-skin about the lock of his gun.

"Swim?"

"Why does Prairie Rose ask her warrior a question?" said Kenewa, with a glance of reproach.

"Matata can not swim."

The Huron brave looked both amazed and almost incredulous, but he made no remark; fixing his gun across his neck, he waded into the water, signing to the girl to follow. As soon as the water was deep enough he signed to Matata to place her hands upon his shoulders, giving her at the same time a few simple directions.

Then he struck out, and the girl being intelligent and quick, he was able easily to support this weight until the island was reached; a wild, savage yell proclaiming that the enemy had just come up a minute too late.

Kenewa and Matata, without a word, cast themselves on the ground, one beside the other, behind the covert of a fallen log just in time to avoid a shower of missiles, which was poured upon them by the exasperated Shawnees, who now had either to give up the chase or swim to the island in the face of a brave and gallant foe, armed with one of the deadliest instruments of destruction then known—the western rifle.

All was still as death a moment later, as the Shawnees retired out of range of their enemies' shot, to hold council as to their future proceedings.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WATERFALL LEAP.

The spot to which Kenewa had swum was the extreme point of the island, a narrow space, with one or two trees growing on its surface, and with several logs which had fallen from decay, thus forming a kind of natural breastwork, behind which, by lying close, the young brave and his lovely companion were completely protected so long as they lay perfectly still.

As soon as the first moment of excitement had passed, Kenewa raised his head cautiously and slowly to take a survey of the two banks.

He found that he was almost equidistant from both, and therefore equally exposed to a shot from both sides, should the enemy occupy both banks and place him between a cross-fire.

A hundred yards or so below the island could be heard the dull murmur of a waterfall, while a critical eye could have told the very spot where the hitherto sluggish current began to feel the influence of the cataract.

Kenewa, who, like every Indian warrior, looked forward to the uses to which a thing

might be put, examined every detail of the scene minutely, and then became once more an observant watcher of the movements of his pursuers.

He could see where they were concealed by the movement of the bushes, and, had he been so inclined, he could have fired a shot with fatal accuracy into their midst. But every charge of powder was invaluable, as he might have to stand a siege of many hours, unless the reverberating echoes of the guns in the mountains brought his friends to relieve him.

The Shawnees, who were now ten in number, suddenly reappeared upon the bank; four ran into the water with large fresh-cut bushes to mask their heads, while six opened a rapid fire on the point of the island.

Casting one quick glance, that thrilled to the girl's heart, to see that she was safe, Kenewa put his rifle close to his hand, and then took the bow and arrows.

He was lying flat on his stomach, with an aperture not more than six inches wide between two logs, for a loophole; but through this loophole he could distinctly see the advancing Shawnees, or, at all events, the bushes which concealed them. With a sarcastic smile at a device so little calculated to answer its purpose, Kenewa took aim just at the spot where the bushes touched the water.

A cry arose; the bush floated slowly past, and frantic struggles, an arm waved on high, with a bloody discoloration of the water, showed how fatal had been the Huron's aim.

A second shot made the Indians turn for the shore.

Then spoke the western rifle, and being discharged with fatal result, the gun decided this phase of the conflict, and for a moment the contest was over, with a loss to the enemy of two.

This was, to a certain extent, a reprieve, but it involved certain death, with torture and the stake, should they at length fall into the hands of the remorseless Shawnees.

This last conviction, however, did not influence the warrior in the slightest degree; he acted according to his savage ideas of duty, content to let the future take care of itself.

"Matata would say a word to the brave who has won her heart," suddenly whispered the girl.

"Speak; the ears of a warrior take pleasure in listening to music," replied Lightfoot, tenderly.

The girl blushed—a very prairie rose—with pleasure at his words.

"Kenewa is a great brave," she said, after a short pause; "his arm is powerful, his sight keen; but he is only one, while his enemies are numerous as the leaves of the trees; a wild horse of the prairies is a noble animal, but the skulking wolves in bands will run him down; the Shawnees may therefore outwit a great warrior and take us prisoners. What would they do with Kenewa, the mighty brave?"

"They would send him to the happy hunting-ground of his fathers," was the quiet reply.

"Matata must not outlive the brave, if he is to die; she must go to prepare his wigwam on the plains beyond, where the sun goes to sleep. Never will Matata live to be the squaw of a Shawnee."

"Speak."

With a blush of maiden modesty, but with a heroic and firm look, Matata slightly bared her bosom, and laying one hand upon it, and with the other touching her hunting-knife, she said, in a calm tone:

"When the time comes, strike here; 'twere sweet to die by the hand of my husband."

The warrior's eyes glistened, a glance of unqualified admiration overspread his countenance at the Roman stoicism with which she awaited death, in preference to what to her was degradation and dishonor—the wigwam of a Shawnee.

Placing his powerful arm around her, the Indian gave way for an instant to the impulses of a really warm and passionate nature, and embraced his beloved tenderly.

Then, with a brow as calm as if nothing out of common had occurred, he put her away.

"Matata has spoken well; it shall be as she has said," replied Kenewa.

At this moment a furious volley recommenced from the shore, so furious, indeed, that Kenewa knew the Shawnees had been reinforced. He, however, made no reply, standing wholly on the defensive, and keenly observant of all that might be useful in this terrible emergency.

Suddenly a dark and angry gleam passed through his eyes. A slight rustling had made him turn, and there was Matata, stifling a cry of pain from a wound in her arm, which was bleeding freely.

An instantaneous glance showed him how this had been done. A Shawnee had ascended a pine that projected over the river, and now fully commanded their position.

Kenewa examined the priming of his gun as jealously as if he had been in pursuit of deer or a buffalo.

Next instant there was a flash, a report, and then on one side of the large bough on which the Indian stood fell a gun, while on the other the almost lifeless body of the Shawnee was hurled into the stream, where he miserably perished.

This produced another cessation in the attack, during which Kenewa hastened to stanch the wound—simply a flesh cut—of the undaunted girl. This done, without a word being spoken on either side, Kenewa resumed his duties as an observant sentry.

It was well he did, for scarcely had he done so when the crashing sound of the heavy ax carried by the white man was heard, and a few minutes later, just above where they were situated, the Bandits of the Scioto were seen, dragging a number of large logs to the water's edge.

The brow of the Indian grew dark as midnight, his eyes flashed with unusual fire.

A raft would bear to the island in a quarter of an hour such a force of the foe that he could not hope to cope with them. What, then, was to be done? To fight was useless. Did he swim to the opposite bank with Matata clinging to him, he would be almost immediately overtaken.

He glanced around like a panther at bay. Then a smile irradiated his countenance, and he handed his gun to the Indian girl.

"We can but die," he said, in his softest and most musical tones, "but we will die together."

The Prairie Rose looked at him with a beaming smile; she awaited his pleasure: to live if he lived, to die if he died; but in all things to obey, cherish, and worship him in this world or the next.

His plan once conceived, Kenewa lost not a moment in carrying it into execution.

With his tomahawk and knife he soon released three of the most eligible logs from their parasitical detainers, long branches of which he then used to lash the trunks together, in a rude way, it is true, but enough to suit his purpose.

No sooner had he accomplished this portion of his task than he pushed the frail conveyance into the stream.

Ten minutes later the howling Shawnees and shrieking whites rushed to the spot which Kenewa had so nobly defended, to find it unoccupied.

A hasty glance explained all. There, nearly a hundred feet below, were Kenewa and Matata floating down the center of the stream, the warrior making steady efforts with a pole to force the raft to move in shore.

Utterly to no purpose. In vain he pushed the raft in the eddies—it turns round.

By a gigantic exertion of strength Kenewa checks this rotary motion; the raft rushes on with increased rapidity, and with a loud cry of defiance and triumph from Kenewa, plunges headlong over the boiling and seething cataract.

The Shawnees stood spellbound with mingled horror and admiration.

When Kenewa found that he was drawn with his raft, remorselessly, into the vortex of the cataract, he made his preparations accordingly. It was not the first time that he had gone down a waterfall, while, in shooting the dangerous rapids of his native rivers, he was so expert as to be celebrated even in the eyes of much older and more experienced men.

Every atom of ground along the whole course of the river which was the scene of his present adventures was familiar to him, and he looked, therefore, with less doubt as to the result than any one else might have done.

He knew, however, that extreme caution was necessary to guide his unwieldy but strong float, as well as to prevent Matata from being thrown headlong forward in the boiling torrent.

As he lost command of his floating logs he bade the girl hold firm by the stoutest withes that bound the trunks together, and having fixed his gun upon his back, he stooped, in a half-kneeling posture, with one arm round the girl's face.

The mountain stream, where it fell over the rocks, was still wide, though the principal part of the water rushed through a central gap into a kind of basin, bounded by a projecting rock.

On either side the water was, as it were, driven back to the foot of the cataract. Here it was placid enough.

The chief danger was in the first shock, especially as Matata could not swim.

The chief's brow was dark as he reached the verge of the fall; he set his teeth together, and looked keenly downward.

The plunge was about fourteen feet.

He saw, instantaneously, that the raft would strike the rock at the foot of the fall, and be dashed to pieces; his hand convulsively grasped the arm of the trembling girl, and then, with a fearful shock, the rude logs hit against the jagged rock, separated, and left the two struggling in the water.

Kenewa saw at once that Prairie Rose was insensible, and, holding her firmly with his left arm, with his right he clambered up on the rock which had been the means of destroying the raft. He then saw that the girl was bleeding on the side of the head from a blow, probably from the logs of the raft.

Hastily he placed his hand upon her heart, and discovered that it fluttered. Then, gently, with the tenderness of a mother to a babe, he bathed the wound, which was, however, not serious. He soon saw the roses returning to her cheeks, which discovery once made, he looked quickly around to make sure he was not observed, and, certain of this fact, he stooped to kiss her coral lips with all the ardor of a most romantic and passionate lover.

A gentle sigh followed, and then the kiss was faintly returned.

Blushing like a girl, the Huron warrior lifted his head, and gazed with a half-smile into the face of the maiden, who, on opening her eyes, could not at once realize her true position.

She soon, however, remembered all, and shuddered as she gazed upward at the broad sheet of water over which they had made so fearful a plunge.

"Matata has been asleep," said Kenewa, kindly.

"Something seemed to strike me," she replied, "and the world passed away like a shadow."

"She is better now?"

"Yes; Matata will no longer be a burden to her warrior," she cried, rising from her recumbent posture.

The Huron chief now carefully drew the charge of his gun, reloaded it, and examined the priming, after which he took a wary and cautious glance around, his eyes particularly fixing themselves on one spot.

On the opposite side of the stream to that which the Shawnees had occupied while attacking him, the rock was very steep, but not so nearly perpendicular as to prevent several bushes from growing up its sides. Now, on more than two occasions, Kenewa had seen a stone fall into the placid pool, caused by the backward, at the foot of this cliff, and to his fancy they were either cast purposely, or displaced by some one creeping down the surface of the slope.

As soon as his gun was loaded, his eyes were gradually, very gradually, raised toward the place from whence the stones appeared to fall. As he did this, one much larger fell with a louder splash (he judged by sight, not hearing), and before the ripples had faded into broader circles, his eyes detected the honest face of the scout, peering at him from behind a bush, which effectually concealed his person.

No sooner did Steve perceive that his presence was known, than he pointed to the upper part of the river, where the Shawnees were in pursuit, and then indicated that they were descending the bank in the direction of Kenewa and Matata.

The brow of the Huron warrior became dark as midnight at this indication. Seated where they were, they would be a certain mark for sharpshooters from above; to climb to where Steve was ensconced was impossible, especially as from the opposite side they might be riddled with shot, before they could fire one volley in their own defense.

The brave young chief would have been totally unembarrassed, but for the presence of one who to him was dearer than his life.

His eye, after a minute or two, noted a line of froth which seemed stationary, and which went in a diagonal direction from where

they stood to the western bank. This he knew, from the drift, sticks, moss, and leaves that hung by the frothy line, indicated a rift.

It ended where a white oak overhung the water.

"Matata can not swim," he said, pointing to the line, and clutching a broken half of the pole he had steered the raft with, "but she can walk in shallow water—go!" Her brave will follow her when she is safe at yonder tree.

Matata smiled her reply, and, rising, took the stick and entered the water.

Kenewa watched her with the utmost anxiety. She was feeling carefully with her pole, and had already advanced nearly half the distance when suddenly the mountain gully was filled by yells and cries, while several shots were fired in rapid succession, awakening the echoes in the most sudden and unexpected manner. Then a cry wilder and more unearthly than any rose in the air, followed by the falling of a heavy body into the water from the eastern bank.

The good western rifle of Steve the scout had sent one enemy to the happy hunting-grounds of his fathers.

The corpse floated slowly downstream toward the lower falls.

Kenewa turned to see what had become of Prairie Rose, and to his great delight he saw her beautiful face peering at him from under the white oak. When the shots were fired, like a startled fawn she had run along the edge of the rift, in parts scarcely wide enough for one foot, and thus reached the indicated retreat in safety.

(To be continued—Commenced in No. 55.)

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